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Good customer service more vital than ever in these challenging times

Andrew Mellor **Editor**

OVER the past three years or so we've been running a series of articles in *InterPark* on the subject of customer service, written by Chris Smoje who is based in Perth, Australia.

Prior to becoming a customer service expert Chris worked in the attractions industry which obviously gave him many relevant insights into this vital aspect of operations, from how staff should greet customers, through how customers react to things they aren't happy with, to resolving a problem satisfactorily, and everything in between. In the articles he has provided, Chris covered numerous subjects relating to customer service, a number of which those of us who are not experts may not have considered and I'm sure his contributions will have proved to be extremely useful to a lot of attraction owners and operators.

This issue of *InterPark*, however, sees us draw a close to this particular series of articles and I'd like to take the opportunity here to thank Chris for what has been an thoroughly enjoyable and informative look at this area of attraction operation. I've certainly learned a lot from what he has discussed and I hope readers have too.

Good customer service, as has often been pointed out within these articles, comes in many different forms and is a key element to ensuring guests enjoy themselves and want to make a return visit to a venue. The same is true, of course, in all aspects of life where the public is being served or looked after in one way or another; I think one can really appreciate it when great, friendly customer service has been provided and recognise when a staff member or members are doing their very best to make your experience a memorable one for all the right reasons.

Of course when things aren't so good and the service a customer receives isn't up to scratch then it can also be a memorable experience, but for all the wrong reasons. I recently had a bad experience with a car dealer which left me very disappointed and determined not to deal with the company again in the future. To cut a long story short I ended up returning a vehicle I'd bought for a full refund and the change in the attitude of one or two staff members when I did so, compared to that of a few weeks earlier when I went to pick it up, was quite dramatic. Surprise, surprise! The courtesy levels had gone from over the top to virtually zero, so needless to say I won't be returning.

With the situation our industry has found itself in over the past year and more as a result of the global pandemic, I feel it is more important than ever that the customer service provided to park guests is of the highest possible standards. Good communication with visitors to ensure they are comfortable in what will be busy environments, know the protocols in place and can get assistance and advice whenever they need it will be imperative as venues re-open and establish new safety etiquettes in addition to the more regular ones we all expect to find in a park.

As I've noted previously, this year is going to be a challenging one for so many venues as they learn to operate in what is a very different environment to before and adjust accordingly. The customer service provided by every single member of staff will play a key role in these unprecedented times.

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Calendar

July 15–17

Korea Attraction Fair 2021, Bexco Hall 1, Busan, SOUTH KOREA
Contact: JM Company Co.
Tel: +82 1544 7052
Email: jm_fair@naver.com
www.kaafair.com/main.php

August 11–13

IAAPA Expo Asia 2021, Shanghai New International Expo Centre (SNIEC), Shanghai, CHINA
Contact: International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions, 4155 West Taft Vineland Road, Orlando, Florida, USA
Tel: +1 321 319 7600
Fax: +1 321 319 7690
Email: iaapa@IAAPA.org
www.iaapa.org/expos/iaapa-expo-asia

September 7–9

Saudi Entertainment and Amusement Expo, Riyadh International Convention and Exhibition Centre, Riyadh, SAUDI ARABIA
Contact: DMG Events
Tel: +9 661 2697 0287
Email: marketing@saudientertainmentandamusement.com
www.saudientertainmentexpo.com

September 9–11

GTI GUANGZHOU 2021, Area A, China Import and Export Fair Pahou Complex, Guangzhou, CHINA
Contact: Haw Ji Co. Ltd./Game Time International
Tel: +86 20 8126 9851
Email: gametime@taiwanslot.com.tw
http://www.gtiexpo.com.tw/cncht/index.php

September 28–30

IAAPA Expo Europe, Barcelona, SPAIN
Contact: International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions, 4155 West Taft Vineland Road, Orlando, Florida, USA
Tel: +1 321 319 7600
Fax: +1 321 319 7690
Email: iaapa@IAAPA.org
www.iaapa.org/expos/iaapa-expo-europe

October 16–18

CAE Shanghai 2021, Shanghai World Expo Exhibition and Convention Centre, Shanghai, CHINA
Contact: Katie Wang, L&A International Ltd., 6 Penmere Grove, Sale, Cheshire, M33 4FP, UK
Tel: +44 (0)161 610 0022
Email: katie.w@chinaattractionsexpo.org
www.chinaattractionsexpo.org

October 20–22

RAAPA Expo 2021, Pavilion 55, VDNH, Moscow RUSSIA
Contact: RAAPA
Tel: +7 495 234 5233
Email: raapa@raapa.ru
www.raapa.ru

October 19–22

WWA Show 2021, Walt Disney World Resort, Orlando, Florida, USA
Contact: WWA, 8826 Santa Fe Drive, Suite 310, Overland Park, KS 66212, USA
Tel: +1 913 381 6734
Email: patty@waterparks.org
www.waterparks.org

November 10–11

Family Attraction Expo 2021, NEC Birmingham, UK
Contact: 4 Colston Ave., Bristol, BS1 2NT, UK
Tel: +44 (0)117 930 4927
www.familyattractionexpo.co.uk

November 16–19

IAAPA Attractions Expo, Orange County Convention Centre, Orlando, Florida, USA
Contact: International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions, 4155 West Taft Vineland Road, Orlando, Florida, USA
Tel: +1 321 319 7600
Fax: +1 321 319 7690
Email: iaapa@IAAPA.org
www.iaapa.org/expos/iaapa-expo

November 30– December 2

MAPIC, Palais des Festivals, Cannes, FRANCE
Contact: Reed MIDEM, 27 Quai Alphonse Le Gallo, CS 10026 Boulogne, FRANCE
Tel: +33 179 71 95 15
Email: Daniela.jakovljevic@reedmidem.com
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February 3–5


Atrax '22. 9th International Amusement – Attraction, Park – Recreation Industry and Services Exhibition. Istanbul Expo Centre, Istanbul, TURKEY
Contact: Tureks International Fairs Co.
Tel: +90 212 570 6305
Email: nergis@tureksfuar.com.tr
www.tureksfuar.com.tr

March 26–28

CAE Beijing 2022, China International Exhibition Centre, Shunyi New Venue, Beijing, CHINA
Contact: Katie Wang, L&A International Ltd., 6 Penmere Grove, Sale, Cheshire, M33 4FP, UK
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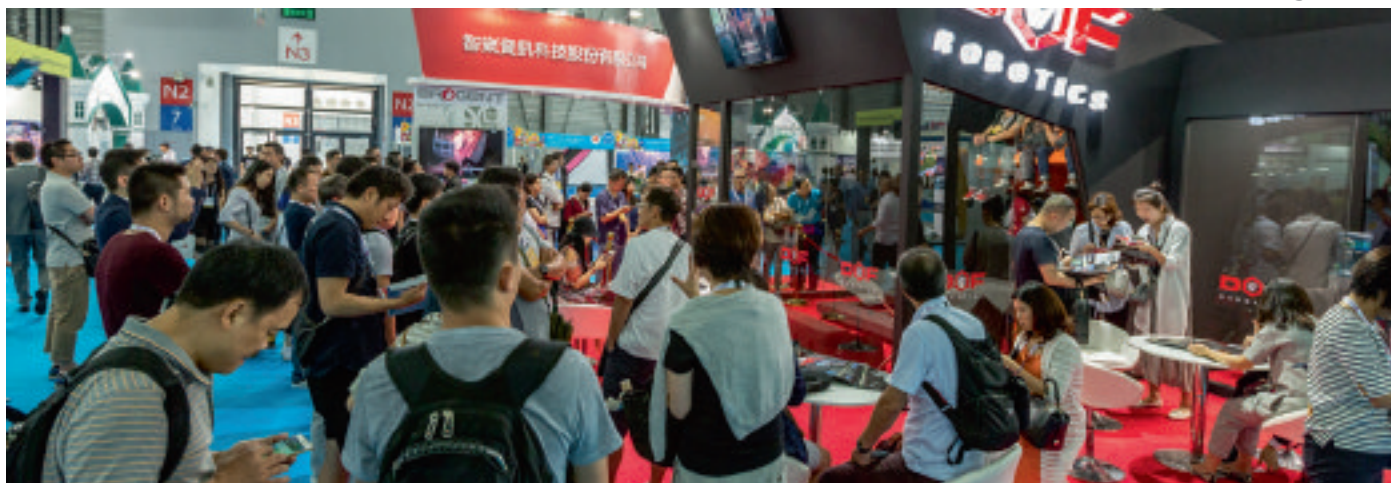
March 28–30

DEAL 2022, Dubai World Trade Centre, Dubai, UAE
Contact: International Expo-Consults (IEC)
Tel: +971 4 343 5777
Email: deal@iecdubai.com
www.dealmiddleeastshow.com

 Additional copies of **InterPark** distributed at these events.

As dates sometimes change, please check with organisers before visiting international trade events.

The IAAPA Expo Asia is scheduled to take place from August 11 to 13 at the Shanghai New International Expo Centre (SNIEC) in Shanghai, China





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AIMS International launches young professionals' programme

AIMS International, specialists in amusement safety education, has introduced a young professionals' programme.

The scheme is aimed at engaging younger industry professionals who have an interest in the work of AIMS International, in order to train, grow and empower the next generation of amusement industry safety specialists.

The programme is being run by a team of more than 40 student moderators. Leading the team is Sam Bercik, AIMS' young professionals education co-ordinator. Bercik will be graduating with a Bachelor of Science in mechanical engineering in 2022. Her internships include work at the Walt Disney Company, Colgate-Palmolive, Eaton and, currently, Tesla.

Another key figure collaborating on the programme is Garrett Monteiro, a recent graduate of computer science at California Polytechnic State University. Monteiro is a software engineer for Worldbuildr and is the founder of TESD, an online community of students around the world who are interested in themed entertainment.

AIMS International's executive director MJ Brewer said: "I am excited to see interest in amusement safety from those newest to our industry and pleased to introduce a programme designed to engage and empower this enthusiastic group."



Commerman joins BoldMove Nation as technical operations director

BOLDMOVE Nation, creators of media-based attractions, has appointed Michel Commerman as technical operations director.

Commerman brings extensive experience and knowledge in technical planning and project management for themed family entertainment centres to the company. He has a degree in architecture and worked as project leader at Plopsa Group and at KCC as design director. He also worked for seven years at IP2 Entertainment, where he created new concepts and attractions for renowned IP holders, including Dreamworks, National Geographic, Mattel, Fox and Marvel.

The position will involve Commerman ensuring all products are created following the highest quality and safety standards.

Anja D'Hondt, managing partner and "queen of happy hearts" at BoldMove Nation, commented: "We've known Michel for some time and he combines excellent technical and analytical skills for master planning and project and production management. In addition, he adds valuable market insights to new projects like the innovative Houba World FEC with media-based attractions."



Zamperla launches three new products

ZAMPERLA, specialists in the design and manufacture of a wide range of amusement rides and roller coasters, has launched three new products.

The new additions were announced at Z-Funweek, a week-long event initiative by Zamperla that is "full of surprises and special projects." One new product is the ChronoZ, a family tweener ride that accommodates up to 12 passengers per cycle. The ride features intertwining arms and riders are seated back-to-back while two arms rotate vertically in opposite directions.

Also launched at Z-Funweek was the Gryphon, one of the few attractions that offer a single rider experience. The ride combines gravity effects and accelerations, accompanied by spectacular lights and dynamic action sequences.

And a third addition to the line-up is the Super Flume ride. Hailed as a "new flume experience," the attraction comprises a track and lap bar which allows for fast drops and plenty of airtime. The Super Flume features two chutes. Passengers feel the rush of 60km/h on a 12m drop and enjoy an airtime hump on the eight metre drop.

Z-Funweek is running halfway through each month until the end of 2021. The event is designed to enable guests from around the world to discover brand-new products each month.

IAAPA planning to host three expos in 2021

IAAPA is going ahead with plans to host its three IAAPA expos this year. The decision to hold the events is part of the association's drive to move the industry forward following the challenges and period of stagnation created by the global pandemic.

IAAPA Expo Asia: 2021 Insights day is to take place on August 10, followed by a trade show, education programmes and special events that will run from August 11 to 13. The event is returning to the Shanghai New International Expo Centre (SNIEC), China.

IAAPA Expo Europe is going ahead in Barcelona from September 27 to 30. The Expo will feature the trade show, special events and education programmes and will focus on helping participants reinvent, restart and reconnect.

IAAPA Expo will be returning to the Orange County Convention Centre (OCCC) in Orlando in November. The premier attractions industry event of the year will boast more than 75 education sessions, a vast trade show floor, networking events, fundraising for Give Kids The World Village and much more. The event will run from November 15 to 18, with the trade show floor open from November 16 to 19.



TDI-PS looks to expand in North America

TDI Production Solutions (TDI-PS), a UK-based company that specialises in sustainable transport solutions, is looking for expansion opportunities in the US.

The company is working with the attractions and leisure market to improve sustainability in design and production. It offers a number of low and zero emission solutions to cater to a variety of attraction venues, including theme parks, zoos, safari parks and more. TDI-PS has already completed several projects for attraction sites in North America, including 12 land trains in the past 12 months, which it delivered in partnership with transport specialists Deltrain of Portugal.

Sam Sharp, sales manager at TDI-PS, commented on the opportunities being looked at in North America, saying: "We were delighted to complete these projects in the US and Canada which have given us a strong basis from which to promote what TDI-PS can offer leisure and attraction venues in the region.

"We provide a full turnkey leisure transport systems supply, consultancy and planning process, incorporating a complete review of any project prior to making our recommendations," he added. "The aim from the outset is to find the best solution for a venue, while considerations will also include areas such as route analysis where, for example, stops positioned at potentially 'profitable' areas of a park, such as F&B and retail outlets, will be incorporated into a design."



NEWS IN BRIEF

FRANCE Disneyland Paris is on target to complete its solar canopy plant by 2023. Construction of the solar plant, which will be one of the biggest of its kind in Europe, began in 2020. The first phase construction is due to finish this summer. More than 12,000 solar panels have already been installed, covering an area of 1,770 parking spaces.

US Walt Disney World Resort in Florida has announced it will be phasing out temperature checks for visitors and cast members. The announcement comes in response to new pandemic guidance from local health and government officials.

CHINA Genting Singapore has reported a 32 per cent drop in revenue in the first quarter of 2021. Q1 figures for the Singapore-based leisure, hospitality and integrated resorts development specialist, stood at \$277.9m. The company's adjusted EBITDA dropped 15 per cent to \$135.1m. Genting Singapore's net profit after tax fell 26 per cent to S\$34.5m. The revenue decline has been pinned on the coronavirus outbreak, which continues to weigh on the company's operational performance.

UK Drayton Manor Park in Staffordshire was due to open a new nautical-themed area known as Adventure Cove this spring. The maritime-themed zone will feature new rides, attractions and experiences for families, including a new seafaring-style River Rapids attraction. Other rides at the park have also undergone a facelift, including the Shockwave stand-up coaster.



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Hot Ice returns to Blackpool Pleasure Beach with Euphoria show

BLACKPOOL Pleasure Beach's much-loved show Hot Ice is returning in 2021, with a brand new production entitled Euphoria.

Hot Ice is the world's longest running ice show. It will open at the Pleasure Beach on July 8 and run until September 11. Euphoria features some of the world's leading ice-skating performers, accompanied by stunning costumes created by the Pleasure Beach wardrobe team, a state-of-the-art lighting system, explosive pyrotechnic fire effects, dramatic music and more.

Amanda Thompson OBE, managing director of the Pleasure Beach, has been both producer and director of the Hot Ice show for more than 20 years. Oula Jaaskelainen, a member of the Hot Ice cast and former Olympic athlete, choreographs the show.



Compagnie des Alpes shares minutes of annual shareholders' meeting

COMPAGNIE des Alpes, a leading name in the leisure industry, has shared the minutes of its annual shareholder meeting. The meeting was held on March 25.

In his address to the meeting, Dominique Marcel, chairman and CEO, noted how on January 21 this year the group had announced that its leisure parks had lost sales since the start of the season, which totalled more than €50m (\$60.4m) compared to the 2018/2019 year.

Factoring in the likelihood that most of its leisure attraction sites would remain closed throughout the second quarter, the total amount of lost sales is around €65m (\$78.5m). Additionally, the closure of all Compagnie des Alpes sites in April will generate an additional loss in sales of around €40m (\$48.3m).

Marcel also noted how, considering the sites had been fully closed, thanks to the efforts undertaken by the group since the start of the current financial year, Compagnie des Alpes would be able to offset the lost sales. It will achieve this by reducing operating expenses by at least 30 per cent for its two main business lines – leisure parks and ski areas – excluding the offer of indemnification/government compensation, compared with the range of 25 per cent to 30 per cent previously indicated.



Simworx to supply attraction for Hunderfossen Eventyrpark

SIMWORX, manufacturers of media-based attractions, is to supply Norway's fairy tale and troll focused theme park Hunderfossen Eventyrpark with a new attraction.

Known as the Reodor Felgen's Hyperakselerator, the attraction is centred on characters from Norwegian author and illustrator Kjell Aukrust's Flåklypa Universe, Solan and Ludvig. Guests can test out Reodor, a crazy Norwegian inventor's solution to the challenges involving sustainability and climate change in the automotive and transportation industry.

The attraction will comprise four, eight-seat Stargazers which use 6DOF motion platforms, enabling for a variety of movements. The ride sits in front of a large 3D, 16m wide curved screen.

The vehicles combine old and traditional elements, boasting steam punk inspired theming, designed to resemble Reodor's Hyperakselerator from the story. Theming was designed and constructed by Farmer Attraction Development Ltd. Fitted with special effects, guests will encounter the sensations of water, wind and touch, to bring greater realism to the story.

Beginning at Felgen's workshop and entertained by Solan and Ludvig's witty commentary, guests will encounter numerous challenges and surprises along the way on an unpredictable race down the mountainside from the top of Pinch Cliff. The ride lasts for around five minutes.

Norwegian animation company Qvisten provided the ride's custom produced media.

UK's first Flying Theatre ride to open at Legoland Windsor



THE first Flying Theatre ride in Britain is coming to Legoland Windsor. Known as Flight of the Sky Lion, the ride is part of Lego Mythica: World of Mythical Creatures, a new land that was due to open at the theme park on May 29.

The Flight of the Sky Lion, supplied by Brogent Technologies, stands at more than 25m tall. When aboard, families are taken under the wing of the sky lion named Maximus. They are then transported to the parallel universe of Lego Mythica, where numerous mythical Lego creatures come to life.

The Flying Theatre ride swoops, ducks and dives over the new land, bringing guests face-to-face with the likes of a two-headed Hydra, a Fire and Ice Bird and the Greek mythological inspired Chimera creature.

Lego Mythica: The World of Mythical Creatures is a multi-million-pound land that was created by children for children. The land marks Legoland Windsor's single biggest investment since it opened 25 years ago and also features the Fire and Ice Freefall ride, from Zierer, and Hydra's Challenge, a water attraction.

On the day the new area was revealed, Helen Bull, divisional director at Legoland Windsor Resort, said: "We're thrilled to be bringing the first Flying Theatre ride to the UK and today revealing all the rides and attractions which will make Lego Mythica: World of Mythical Creatures a must-do experience for families in 2021."



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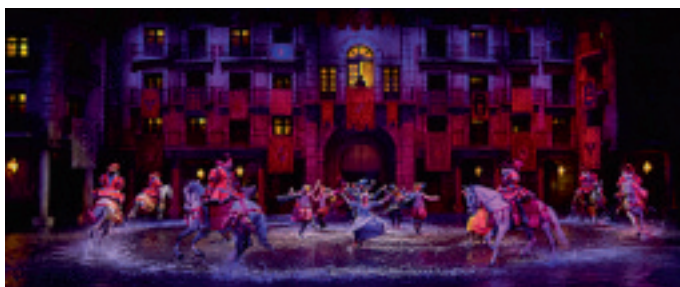
Puy du Fou opens in Spain

A NEW Puy du Fou España has opened in the Toledo Mountains, less than an hour from Madrid. The new 30 hectare site is Puy du Fou's first full-scale park outside France.

Puy du Fou España features four shows centred on Spanish history and nature. The shows incorporate magnificent sets and staging with special effects and stunts. Other attractions at the new open-air site include four period villages housing restaurants, artisan boutiques and craftsmen, as well as the chance to take in the natural beauty and spectacular views of the Toledo Mountains.

After dark guests are seated in the open-air auditorium, the largest stage in Spain, where they can watch *El Sueño de Toledo*. Since launching two years ago, the show, which explores 1,500 years of Spanish history, has proven immensely popular.

Puy du Fou España opened on March 27, 2021, marking another yardstick in Puy du Fou's 43 years of creative expertise.



Walibi Holland renews virtual queuing partnership with acceso

WALIBI Holland has renewed its partnership with acceso Technology Group, a technology solutions provider for attraction sites around the world.

The longstanding theme park in the Netherlands expanded its partnership with acceso in May 2020 in response to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The venue already had acceso's patented virtual queuing solution in place as a premium service option for guests prior to the pandemic.

In the wake of the health crisis, the operator made the decision to implement 100 per cent virtual queuing powered by acceso. Visitors to Walibi Holland can leverage what was initially an add-on feature at several rides, through the convenience of their mobile devices.

The 100 per cent virtual queuing model played an important role in maintaining the satisfaction and health and safety of guests during the 2020 season. With the renewal of the model, Walibi Holland is set to retain a safe and enjoyable experience for visitors.

Ahead of the 2021 season, acceso was due to debut an all-new virtual queuing functionality to support its partners. The functionality includes ride sorting by wait time by guests, groups being able to split up and join separate ride queues and operator tools to cater for visitors arriving at the park later in the day, among other features.



Tornado Springs debuts at UK's Paultons Park

TORNADO Springs, the highly awaited new land at Paultons Park in the UK, has finally opened to the public. The £12m investment covers four acres and features eight new rides and experiences.

Tornado Springs is the biggest new opening at a UK theme park this year. The land was due to open in 2020 but this was postponed because of the pandemic and the forced closure of theme parks globally. The long-awaited new land opened on April 12, alongside the rest of the park, and is a concept born from the imagination of the team at Paultons Park and their creative partners. The Route 83 theme of the area is exclusive to the Hampshire-based venue and is the only land in the world to have such a theme. Route 83 runs through Tornado Springs and was inspired by the date the park first opened, in May 1983.

At the heart of the area is the Storm Chaser roller coaster, featuring a 459m track that takes passengers more than 20m above the ground. The Storm Chaser is the first free spinning ride of its kind in the UK.

Another key highlight is Al's Auto Academy, where youngsters and their parents step aboard one of 30 themed cars and head out on the "open road."

More than 20 specialist engineers from Germany, Italy, Denmark, Holland and Wales were involved in building the rides and experiences on offer at Tornado Springs, in collaboration with the theme park's own in-house team. Adding the finishing touches to the new land has been a team of gardening specialists. There is also fully themed Route 83 memorabilia available to purchase from new retail ranges.



Hotel Transylvania attraction opens at Dream Island, Moscow



DREAM ISLAND in Moscow, Russia, has opened its new themed area known as Hotel Transylvania. The launch of the Dracula-inspired attraction comes ahead of the release of Sony Pictures Animation's *Hotel Transylvania: Transformania*, which is set to roll-out in the summer of this year.

Visitors reach the attraction by crossing a bridge that extends over a foggy moat. When they reach the hotel lobby they are greeted by Dracula. After visiting the hotel, guests can experience the new land's Tavern of Fear snack bar, the Vampire's Bite burger bar and the Transylvania Treasures gift shop.

Ivan Scholl, technical director of Dream Island, said: "We partnered with Sony Pictures in order to achieve an authentic experience that will be the first attraction of this level in Russia, in one of the world's leading theme parks.

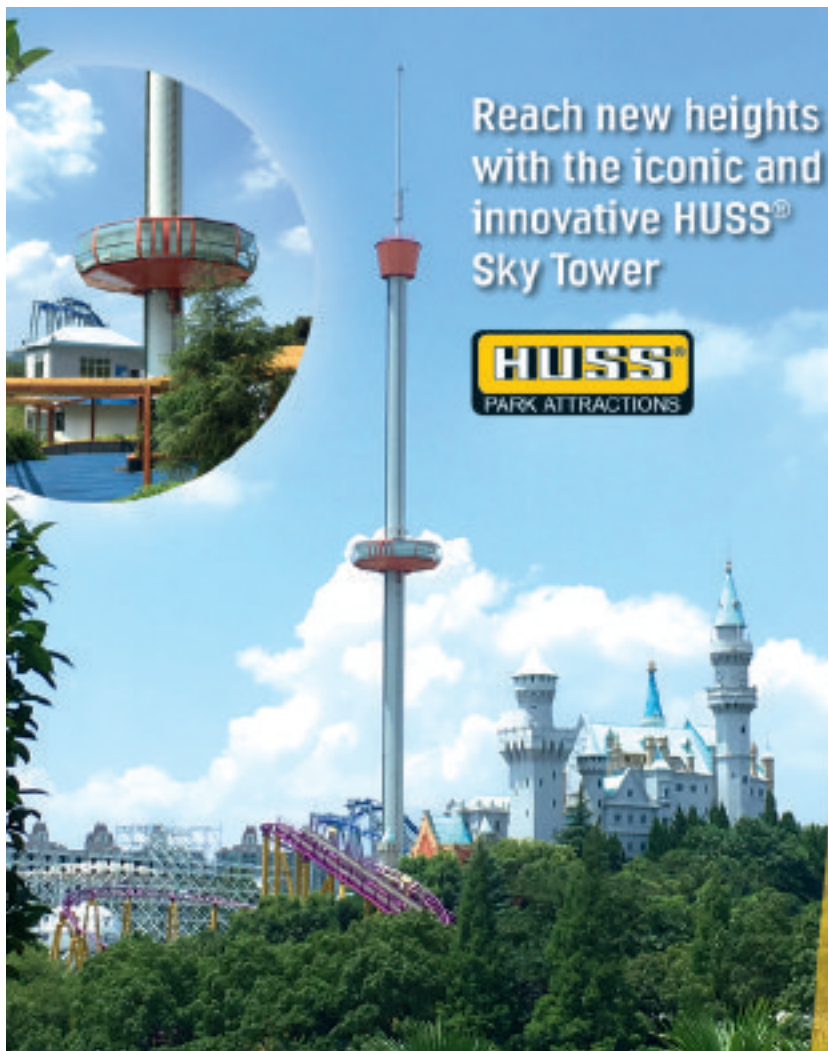
"The work on the Hotel Transylvania themed area took more than three years, as we wanted to build a unique space for Russia, combining the latest technical and creative solutions to create a compendia horror experience suitable for the whole family," Scholl added.



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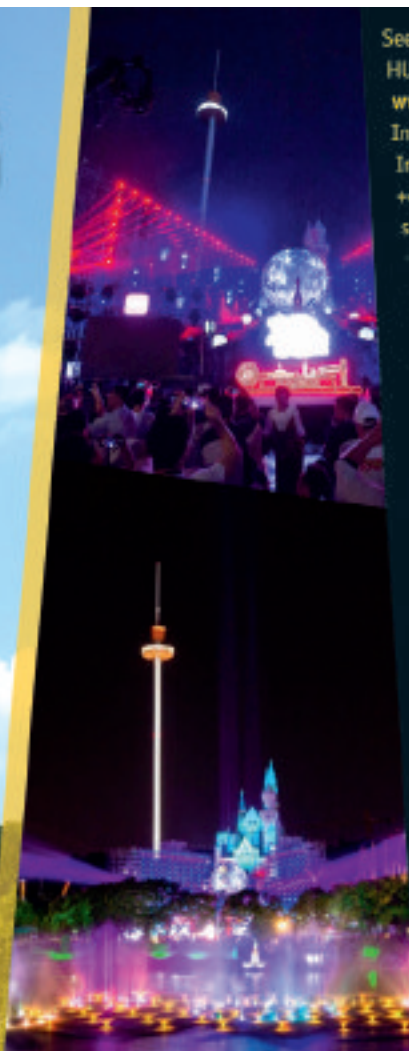
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Saudi Arabia invests \$5.2bn in first phases of AlUla

SAUDI Arabia is investing \$5.2 billion to fund the first phase of the Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU), pegged to be the world's largest living museum by 2035.

AlUla will be a major centre for heritage, culture, arts and adventure tourism in Saudi Arabia. The \$15 billion development is being built in three phases, the first of which is due to be complete in 2023. The site will comprise five districts, five heritage sites and 15 cultural assets.

Amr AlMadani, CEO of the Royal Commission for AlUla, said: "We are well into executing phase one. This includes the upgrade of the airport, which has been completed. We will start our low-carbon tram development infrastructure as well. And, so far, our visitor experience centres in the heritage and nature site are being upgraded."

Discussions are also being held with several hotel operators as the destination plans to have almost 9,500 hotel rooms when complete.

Extreme Engineering completes Cloud Coaster project in Qatar

EXTREME Engineering, a leading engineering and fabrication company for the amusement industry, has completed its suspended roller coaster project for Quest, Doha Oasis in Qatar.

Construction of the Cloud Coaster concluded in February this year. The Cloud Coaster is installed in the City of Imagination zone of the Quest theme park.

The park is centred on storytelling which revolves around the theme of time. It comprises three time-dimensions – the City of Imagination, which is a present cityscape, Oryxville, designed as an ancient Arab land, and Gravity, a state-of-the-art, sci-fi spaceport.

The Cloud Coaster soars guests above the City of Imagination's thrill rides and restaurants, providing stunning views of the different worlds at Quest. Riders take flight with Flap, a topical bird and one of the main characters at the park. The suspended flying coaster launches guests along 600ft of track, which drops, swoops and turns, providing the sensation of a bird in flight.

Extreme Engineering worked with Nassal, an industry leading master planning company, on the project. Phil Watson, executive vice-president with Extreme Engineering, commented: "We were very excited to work with Nassal and help achieve Doha Oasis' vision with the park. The Cloud Coaster was an anchor attraction for the Quest theme park. With Nassal, our team was able to co-create a one-of-a-kind family coaster experience."



World's tallest swing ride opens in Dubai

THE Bollywood Skyflyer – dubbed the world's tallest swing ride – has opened in Dubai. The new sky-high ride stands at 460ft, the same height as the Great Pyramid of Giza.

The ride operates at Bollywood Parks Dubai and sets a new world record for the tallest swing ride in the world, surpassing the former record holder, the Orlando Starflyer, which measures 450ft, by 10ft. The new attraction comprises 421 tonnes of steel, took 600 days to construct and 120 days to install at Bollywood Parks Dubai.

The theme park was forced to close for several months because of the COVID-19 crisis. It reopened in January with the addition of nine new rides, including the Bollywood Skyflyer.



IMG Worlds of Adventure in Dubai reopens

IMG Worlds of Adventure, the huge indoor theme and amusement park in Dubai, has reopened to the public.

The park opened its doors on May 7. During its closed period, the venue underwent extensive refurbishment and renovations, including upgrades to many of its rides and attractions. Throughout its closure, maintenance work was carried out to ensure more seamless operation with heightened security and safety measures in place that adhere to the guidelines of the Dubai Department of Economic Development and international best practices. The work included a complete sanitisation of the park and the implementation of strict cleaning programmes throughout.

Shortly after reopening, a series of special activities, events and performances were held at IMG Worlds of Adventure to celebrate Eid Fitr 2021.



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Dynamic's first co-venture to kick off this summer in Smokey Mountains

THE grand opening of Dynamic Technology Group's first co-venture is approaching. The attraction will launch this summer in the Smokey Mountains of Tennessee.

Built by Dynamic Attractions, the Flying Theatre ride is to open at The Island in Pigeon Forge, a shopping, dining and entertainment venue. The \$20m investment will combine a custom film featuring many of the US's most iconic landmarks and beautiful natural landscapes, with a state-of-the-art ride system. Guests will be taken on a sensual journey, encountering different scents, sounds, movements and mists.

Dynamic Attractions has built popular attractions for theme parks around the world, including Disney and Universal Studios, and Bob McManus, president of The Island in Pigeon Forge, said: "We are very excited to bring another premier attraction to The Island in Pigeon Forge. This Flying Theatre will truly be a one-of-a-kind, immersive entertainment experience. From The Island, guests will be transported to places that they otherwise may never have the opportunity to see and will experience the beauty of America in a unique and unforgettable way."

The Flying Theatre attraction is in the final stages of planning. It is due to open this summer.



Knott's Berry Farm celebrates its 100th anniversary

KNOTT'S Berry Farm in California is commemorating its 100th anniversary with summer-long celebrations. The Knott's Family Reunion event will pay tribute to the rich history of the Knott family with fun for all.

The event is running from May 21 to September 6. During this time, the park is featuring festive décor, themed food, unique entertainment, special surprises and exclusive merchandise. Additionally, guests visiting the park during the Family Reunion event will be able to experience the brand-new Knott's Bear-y Tales: Return to the Fair, an interactive 4D dark ride which pays tribute to the classic attraction from 35 years ago.

Visitors will also be able to meet and greet some new loveable costumed characters and enjoy special evening entertainment at the Summer Nights



event, featuring live music, DJs and one-of-a-kind specialties. A nightly ceremony will take place too, where numerous attractions will be available to experience, including a special moment with the illuminated K-tower.

The 57-acre theme park opened in the 1920s as a roadside berry stand along State Route 39 in California. It was founded and run by farmer Walter Knott.



\$46m visitor centre under development at Niagara Falls State Park

NIAGRA Falls State Park is developing an extensive visitor centre which will be home to exhibits, an immersive experience and a museum.

The state-of-the-art visitor centre is costing \$46m to construct and is set to open in 2023. The new facility will cover 28,000sq.ft and will feature ticketing, interpretation, dining and retail areas. The centre will also be equipped with a rooftop solar park with green elements.

New York's governor, Andrew Cuomo, said the visitor centre will improve the visitor experience and increase the amount of time visitors spend at Niagara Falls State Park.

"New York is home to some of the nation's greatest parks and outdoor recreational opportunities that attract visitors from all across the globe and Niagara Falls State Park is no exception," Cuomo commented.

"This new visitor centre continues the stunning transformation of New York's most famous and most visited state park, welcoming the millions of tourists who visit each year while highlighting the unique history and beauty of the park and the entire Western New York community," he added.

Universal Studios Hollywood reopens with new ride

UNIVERSAL Studios Hollywood reopened on April 16 with a new ride. *The Secret Life of Pets: Off the Leash* is inspired by Illumination's film, *The Secret Life of Pets*.

The attraction is located in Pets Place at Katie's apartment in New York City. The ride vehicles resemble cardboard boxes. Once inside the boxes, guests are taken on a journey across New York City, where they meet a total of 64 animated figures brought to life with projection mapping and hyper-realistic media. The characters are programmed to be mobile and can tilt their heads and curl their ears.

The *Secret Life of Pets: Off the Leash* also features state-of-the-art optical enhanced gesture-tracking technology designed to identify each rider as one of 15 puppies that have gone astray.

Karen Irwin, president and CEO of Universal Studios Hollywood, commented on the challenges of the last year, saying: "It has been a very challenging year and we are overjoyed to have arrived at this moment. We are incredibly thrilled to finally be able to open Universal Studios Hollywood, return team members to work and welcome guests back to enjoy our amazing rides."





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New Jersey, New York and Connecticut lift most industry capacity restrictions

NEW Jersey, New York and Connecticut have announced the lifting of most industry capacity restrictions in light of vaccination progress and a decline in COVID-19 case numbers.

The governors of the respective states all announced the significant easing of restrictions, many of which will affect theme parks and other attraction sites. The phasing out of restrictions began on May 19. In New Jersey and New York, business capacity limits have been replaced with sufficient space to be able to maintain six feet of social distancing.

The reduction in capacity limits will have a positive impact on both indoor and outdoor amusement and recreation businesses, which have been limited to 50 per cent capacity, as have indoor and outdoor pools, which are also now able to enjoy a larger number of visitors.

New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy said: "With our COVID-19 numbers, particularly hospitalisations, trending decisively in the right direction and our vaccination goals within reach, now is the time to take major steps to reopen our economy and loosen both indoor and outdoor gathering and capacity restrictions."

Six Flags St. Louis celebrates 50th anniversary

SIX Flags St. Louis is celebrating 50 years of Fun. To mark the anniversary, from June 5 until July 24, the theme park will ramp up its offerings to visitors, with new photo ops and the opening of a Memory Museum and Anniversary Emporium.

Visitors will be able to learn about the park's history in the Memory Museum, where vintage uniforms will be on display, alongside details of milestones, information on past events and more.

Inside the Anniversary Emporium in the Palace Gardens, guests will be able to buy 50th. anniversary themed memorabilia, including shirts, pins, cups and more. Throwback items that were for sale in the park many years ago will also be available to purchase, including paper flowers and balloons from the early 1970s.

Six Flags St. Louis will also be home to new entertainment shows during the anniversary event, namely the Golden Celebration show and an interactive Dance Party show. The shows are being held on the Palace Porch.

Additionally, Bugs Bunny is returning to Six Flags St. Louis to celebrate the park's milestone birthday with socially-distanced photo opportunities.



AEM announces opening of Xtreme Play Adrenaline Park

AMUSEMENT Entertainment Management (AEM), providers of consulting services including business plan development and conceptual design and layout services, has announced the launch of a new adrenaline park in Danbury, Connecticut.

Xtreme Play Adrenaline Park is the newest entertainment facility in the state. The 30,000sq.ft venue covers multiple levels and boasts an array of attractions and experiences.

The facility is owned and operated by Dr. James (Jim) Bonheur. By combining multi-level ropes, ninja warrior and Ballistics courses with immersive motion theatre and virtual reality components, Xtreme Play is designed to deliver the concept of interactive entertainment for both children and adults.

The venue is also home to an Escape from New York laser tag arena, black-lit bowling lanes, full-motion bumper karts and a state-of-the-art amusement game portfolio.

AEM's managing partner Jerry Merola commented: "Jim has elevated indoor entertainment to an art form by combining dynamic environments with high-impact attractions. The attention to detail and level of execution within this facility is simply unmatched."

Xtreme Play Adrenaline Park opened to the public on March 26 this year.

NEAAPA appoints new officers in virtual anniversary meeting



THE Northeast's Entertainment Association (NEAAPA) has installed new officers during the organisation's 108th anniversary meeting, which took place virtually in late March.

Eric Anderson, NEAAPA's outgoing president, from Quassy Amusement and Waterpark in Middlebury, Connecticut, addressed the 57 meeting attendees. Anderson discussed the ongoing work of NEAAPA throughout the COVID-19 crisis,

which brought the attractions industry almost to a halt in 2020.

Anderson also introduced NEAAPA's 57th president, Dave Oberland of Centerplate in Stamford, Connecticut. Oberland talked about the difficult year the industry has faced, saying that he would like to acknowledge the terrific work done by NEAAPA members.

"Our industry has been through the most difficult time in its history and the prospects for 'a return to normal' operating plan this year are still tenuous at the very least," he said.

The virtual event saw the installation of a new slate of officers. These included first vice-president Chris Nicoli, of Canobie Lake Park, Salem, second vice-president Erik Beard of International Ride Training, LLC, Nashville, and treasurer Charlene Conway of Carousel Family Fun Centres in Fairhaven.



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Ardent Leisure appoints new head of theme parks division

ARDENT Leisure Group, the Australian-based leisure company which owns and operates attraction sites across Australia, New Zealand and the United States, has made a surprise new appointment to the head of its theme park division.

Greg Yong will take over from John Osborne, who made the decision to step down from the role for personal reasons. Osborne will, however, continue to consult with Ardent on a number of projects. Yong has been promoted from the position of chief operating officer of Ardent's theme parks and attractions business, a role he had held since May 2019.

Dr. Gary Weiss, chair of Ardent Leisure, spoke of how Osborne has "built an outstanding leadership team and positioned the business to restore value for Ardent shareholders over the coming years."

The new appointment comes amid depressed trading conditions at Ardent Leisure venues. Forecasts have been made that it will take a year from March 2021 for Ardent's cash flow from its Dreamworld theme park on Australia's Gold Coast to recover from the pandemic and lockdowns which forced closure of its parks and gaming sites in Australia and the US.



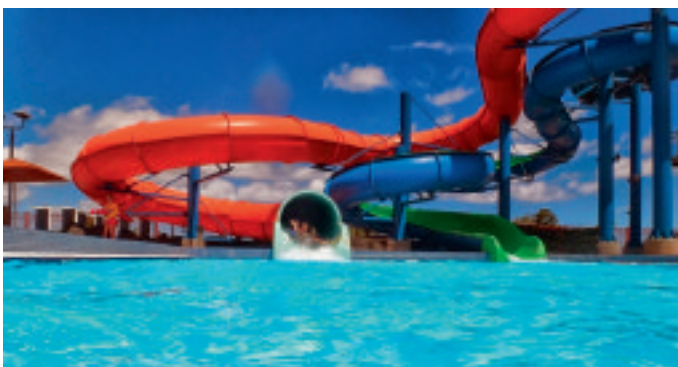
Sony theme park aquapark coming to Thailand

SONY Pictures Entertainment has announced a new deal with Amazon Falls to develop a 14-acre theme park and aquapark in Bangsaray, Thailand.

Known as Columbia Pictures Aquaverse, the site will be the first Columbia Pictures theme park and waterpark in the world. Rides and attractions at the venue are due to start opening in October this year and the venue will feature experiences involving characters from well-known movies, including Ghostbuster, Bad Boys, Jumanji, Hotel Transylvania and Men in Black.

The park will feature eight themed zones, comprising both water and land-based attractions. There will also be entertainment, live shows, themed restaurants, interactive props, unique sets and speciality retail outlets.

Jeffrey Godsick, EVP of global partnerships and brand management and head of location based entertainment at Sony Pictures Entertainment, said: "We are delighted to be teaming up with Liakat Dhanji and Amazon Falls on launching Sony Pictures' first theme park and waterpark and are inspired by his vision of creating an immersive entertainment destination for Thailand."



World's first Lego Braille Bricks event held at Legoland Discovery Centre

LEGOLAND Discovery Centre in Melbourne has played host to the world's first Lego Braille Bricks event to support children who are blind or have low vision.

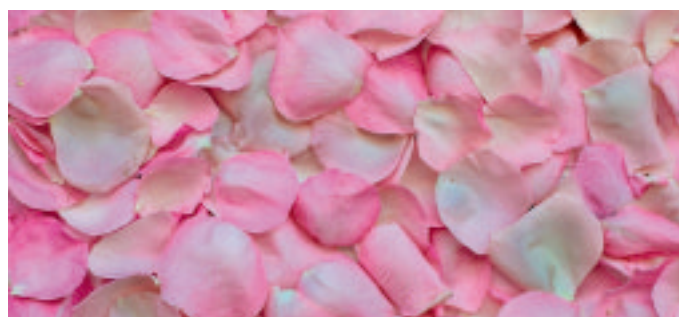
The event was held in partnership with Vision Australia, the Lego Foundation's official partner for the distribution of Lego Braille Bricks in Australia. More than 20 families attended the event where they experienced the new range of Lego bricks designed specifically to offer children with no or low vision to have the opportunity to discover braille.

The braille bricks comprise raised bumps that are modified to correspond to a character or letter from the braille alphabet. Each brick also features a printed character or letter to enable visually impaired children to learn and play with sighted family members, friends, classmates and educators.

Merlin Entertainments Group's COO for Midway Attractions, Fiona Eastwood, commented: "We are proud that Legoland Discovery Centre is supporting the launch of LEGO Braille Bricks. One of the foundations of Lego and our Legoland attractions is helping kids learn through play, so it's amazing to see how this project is helping children who are blind or have low vision learn braille in a playful and engaging way."

Legoland Discovery Centre is hoping to put on more Lego Braille Bricks events in the future.

Japan's Huis Ten Bosch theme park hosts huge rose festival



HUIS Ten Bosch, the Dutch-style theme park in Nagasaki, Japan, recently played host to one of the largest rose festivals in Asia.

The theme park features an extensive flower field carpeted in cosmos, hydrangeas, tulips and more.

The Rose Festival comprised five areas, starting with the Flower Square in the middle of the park and visitors watched musical performances and parades take place at Flower Square. Further into the park, a 1km-long trail draped in roses ran along the canal. A key feature of the festival was the Rose Palace, where rose gates marked the entrance and a fragrance garden fused the scent of different types of roses.

Another highlight was the white rose garden, which featured a tunnel of white roses. More than 2,000 species of roses were planted in the Grand Rose Garden, which is lit up after dark.

Visitors also tucked into rose-themed food and drink, including a rose afternoon tea featuring a rose-flavoured cheesecake.



New Products Projects

Online Events

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ONLINE EVENTS IN 2021



2021/07/15

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World's highest/fastest double twisted impulse coaster opens at Sunac Land

THE Legendary Twin Dragon, dubbed the "world's highest and fastest double twisted impulse coaster," has opened at Sunac Land in Chongqing, China.

The ride, built by Intamin, boasts a physical track length of 251m, resulting in an experience track length of 1,400m and a height of 70m, meaning the coaster is extremely space efficient. The 360 degree twisted track is propelled high into the air, mimicking a spiked tail and giving the ride a unique and iconic look.

The impulse coaster uses Intamin's powerful LSM drive system to enable the suspended-seating train to launch forward and reach a height of 40m on the first swing. When riders have experienced weightless airtime, the train then rolls backwards to reach a heady height of 52m on the opposite twisting spike element. During the fourth swing, riders are taken to a height of around 65m.

In total, the dragon-themed Legendary Twin Dragon train takes riders on four forward and backward swings, incorporates six weightlessness airtime experiences and propels them to a top speed of almost 120km/h.

Intamin commented that it was proud to have contributed to the success of Sunac Land in Chongqing.

Sea World's new Leviathan coaster nears completion

THE new wooden roller coaster known as Leviathan at Sea World theme park on Australia's Gold Coast is nearing completion.

The ride is located in the park's New Atlantis zone and boasts a structure that resembles a cathedral. It will take guests on an exhilarating 90 second journey across wooden terrain, comprising airtime hills followed by 90 degree banked turns. The attraction is due to open on September 18 this year.

Also opening in September at Sea World is Trident. Visitors can discover the world of the New Atlantis on what will be the theme park's tallest landmark. Trident will tower above the New Atlantis precinct and once on board, riders will spin freely 42m high, while taking in views of the Gold Coast Broadwater and beyond.

Additionally, another new attraction in the area is the Vortex which takes guests through a series of twists, turns and spins, before spiralling 18m above sea level.



Genting SkyWorlds Theme Park to open in 2021

GENTING SkyWorlds Theme Park, the movie-inspired attraction site in Malaysia, will open later in 2021.

The theme park is part of Resorts World Genting (RWG). It is located in Malaysia's Genting Highlands, surrounded by one of the world's oldest tropical rainforests. The new park was due to open in the last quarter of 2020. Genting Malaysia has spent more than \$800m on the project and the theme park features 26 attractions, including water rides and roller coasters, as well as unique experiences.

Guests will be able to meander round nine immersive worlds, all inspired by movies. The worlds include Central Park, Eagle Mountain, Andromeda Base, Liberty Lane, Epic, Ice Age, Studio Plaza, Robots Rivet Town and Rio. There is also a selection of food and drink outlets for guests to choose from.

Genting SkyWorlds Theme Park is expected to become a valuable asset to the tourism industry in Malaysia and the country's economy.



Australian arcade operator goes cashless with Intercard system

INTERCARD, a leading provider of cashless technology for the attraction and amusement industries, has completed the third installation of its cashless system for Village Entertainment's Intensity group of family entertainment centres in Australia.

The installation took place at Intensity Albury, following similar payment solution upgrades at the arcade chain's Mario and Erina Fair venues. Intensity believes that coin and ticket systems are outdated and the installation of the system is part of a drive by the chain to move to cashless technology. It will also enable Intensity to operate with greater efficiency and reduce costs associated with coin-operated systems.

Brion Cummings, national business manager for Intensity, commented on the recent installation, saying: "Intensity Albury will usher in a new beginning with the Intercard system along with Marion and Erina Fair. Albury will be our third location re-opening with Intercard and enjoying a great range of benefits, not to mention no more weekly coin collects, minute by minute reporting, birthday parties not requiring staff to activate free games and of course a range of different packages, essentially bringing Intensity into the 21st century."



Beijing Happy Valley celebrates 15th anniversary with eight new shows

TO celebrate its 15th birthday, Beijing Happy Valley theme park has launched its night-time project designed to enrich the visitor experience in the park after dark.

The event opened on May 1, featuring eight new shows, each with a unique theme and style. Stage performances take place on the Sanxingdui archaeological site, centred on an immersive acrobatic play set in Beijing in the early 1900s. There is also a daily parade featuring 17 floats and more than 100 performers.

Technology is bringing the event to life at night, including LED lights and multimedia and interactive projections, installed throughout the venue. Zhao Xiaobing, general manager of Beijing Happy Valley, said the aim of the project is to make visitors' experience of the park as enjoyable and fun as possible, through the constant improvement of products and customer service.



FlyDome theatre from Project: Syntropy opens in China

PROJECT:SYNTROPY, creators of technologies and display solutions for dome cinemas and immersive attractions, has completed the delivery of a turnkey full dome AV solution for the Qin Palace Flying Theatre at Hengdian World Studios theme park in Dongyang.

The attraction features a 25m full dome screen, a 20+ multi-channel surround-sound system, show control, a 16-channel WUXGA 3D stereo 3DLP laser-phosphor projection system with 4x4 channel media servers and ProjectionTools multi-cam auto-calibration system. The system is also equipped with CCTV.

Project:Syntropy worked on the concept and system design, as well as the manufacturing of projector mounts. The installation and implementation of the complete AV system included calibration and staff training.

Hengdian World Studios theme park was built in the 1990s. The film studio was launched in 1996. With more than 2,200 Chinese and foreign films, alongside TV shows, the site is said to be the largest outdoor film studio in the world.



Universal Beijing Resort releases details of new hotels

UNIVERSAL Beijing Resort has released details of its two new hotels, which promise to offer an "exceptional" experience for guests.

The Universal Studios Grand Hotel is the world's first Universal-themed hotel. It is located at the entrance of the theme park and will offer views over the resort. The hotel is designed to immerse visitors in the Golden Age of Hollywood. The interior will boast contemporary graphic patterns with a neutral colour palette to provide contrast.

The Universal Studios Grand Hotel comprises 800 rooms and suites, including several family-friendly themed rooms that are inspired by DreamWorks Animation's Kung Fu Panda franchise. The hotel is also home to themed restaurants and a Kids Club.

The other hotel opening at Universal Beijing Resort is the NUO Resort Hotel, the first-ever resort hotel from NUO, a luxury hotel brand in China. The hotel will feature 400 rooms and suites. Situated along the waterways of the theme park and surrounded by well-maintained gardens, the hotel is designed to create the sense of being a private retreat.

The NUO Resort Hotel's interiors are inspired by a contemporary take on Chinese traditional cultural and artistic achievements, including a tea room in the lobby lounge.

China's theme park market remains vigorous



THE theme park industry in China remains vigorous, despite the disruption caused by the global pandemic. This was the finding of a report by the consultancy company AECOM.

Theme parks across China are benefitting from increasing disposable incomes among middle income earners, amid a growing demand for themed entertainment, the report found. 30 new theme park projects have been carried out in China during the last three years, the most in any country in the world. Many of these sites have been constructed in the country's developing cities, such as Nanjing in the Jiangsu province and Zhengzhou in the Henan province.

According to the report, the COVID-19 pandemic may have temporarily postponed the opening of new projects but the planning and building of new theme parks remains a long-term and viable goal for China.

The report noted how Overseas Chinese Town attracted 4.7 million visits during China's Spring Festival holiday in February. During the holiday, Happy Valley theme park in Wuhan, the capital of the Hubei province where the COVID-19 virus started, was especially popular.

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WATERPARKS



Endless Surf appoints new personnel to growing team

ENDLESS Surf, inland surfing technology developed by WhiteWater, is growing its team, with new appointments in key roles. The recruitment drive is testament of increasing demand for surf park technology around the world.

Joining as chief commercial officer is Baptiste Caulonque, who will work alongside president, Paul Chutter. Caulonque is well-known in the industry, having worked as a consultant to a number of mixed-use surf developments. Caulonque remains a project director of La Vague Grand Paris development, a huge board sports park opening in France in 2024.

Talking about his love of Endless Surf, Baptiste Caulonque commented: "There have been pivotal moments in my career and being introduced to Endless Surf 18 months ago was one of them. From the start, I was impressed with the professionalism of the team and blown away by their wave technology – I consider myself very lucky to be joining what I'm confident will be the undisputed leading technology and operators' top choice for surf pools."

Also joining the team is Andrew Thatcher, Endless Surf's new vice-president of business development. Thatcher is a South American surfer who is based in San Diego and a board sport venue expert. He has worked in the artificial wave industry since 2000. For the last 20 years he has been on the FlowRider team, creating successful surf bar venues across Asia and the Americas.

Therme Art partners with SUGI to develop native forests



THERME Art, the cultural incubator of Therme Group that is responsible for producing creative communities, has teamed up with SUGI, a leading platform for community-driven rewilding.

The collaboration will see the two creative groups develop native forests at Therme Group locations worldwide. The partnership is focused on forest planting to create important biodiversity restoration hubs at Therme Group sites around the globe.

Therme Art's objective is to counter the modern trend to separate ourselves from nature. The venture emphasises the importance of connecting with the environment, not only for human health, but to nurture a new, holistic cultural attitude.

The collaboration will involve the realisation of a portfolio of native species planting projects at Therme Group facilities around the world. The well-being brand is already widely recognised for its sustainability drive and commitment to reintegrate nature into everyday life.

Polin offers water attraction products to camping and caravan sites

POLIN, manufacturers of water slides and waterparks around the world, is tapping into the camping market, offering innovative solutions for camping and caravan parks.

During the COVID-19 crisis in 2020, Polin completed more than 30 projects at camping sites, including bringing its signature waterslides to camping parks, such as Glassy, the world's first fully transparent waterslide. Polin's additions are designed to help give camping and holiday parks, as well as aquatic centres, an enticing boost, encouraging families and guests to spend more time enjoying the facilities.

The camping sector is gaining momentum, transitioning from a low-cost tourism niche into a mainstream and versatile recreation experience. Europe is forecast to retain its leading position in the camping and caravanning market worldwide, particularly among younger demographics which are increasingly preferring camping and caravanning accommodation over hotels.



ASTM develops proposed standard test method for waterslides

ASTM International, an international standards organisation that develops technical standards for a range of systems and products, is developing a proposed standard to establish a test method for obtaining acceleration data on waterslides using human subjects.

The data acquired by the standard will be pivotal in calculating and developing the expected forces riders experience on a waterslide. According to ASTM, obtaining data about the intensity of forces is key in ensuring riders are not faced with an unexpected event or a safety-related incident. The new standard test method, known as WK72594, can be used to develop existing and future ride designs.

Andreas Tanzer, director of research, design and standards at ProSlide Technology, said: "The proposed standard will establish the method for obtaining data on acceleration forces users would feel when riding on various types of waterslides. The intent is to have consistency in obtaining the acceleration data so it can be processed and authenticated for riders on all waterslides."



WATERPARKS

Legoland Waterpark Gardaland prepares for spring inauguration

GARDALAND in Italy, which re-opened to the public at the end of April, is preparing for the inauguration of the Legoland Waterpark Gardaland.

Work has been carried out on the Entrance Gate, which will welcome visitors into the world of Lego bricks surrounding pools and colourful and towering slides. It will be the first Legoland waterpark in Europe.

Aldo Maria Vigevani, CEO of Gardaland, shared what impact he hopes the waterpark will have on Gardaland, saying: "We are certain that, considering the international importance of the Lego brand, the opening of the Legoland Waterpark at Gardaland will help reinforce our position as a prime fun destination, especially for families."

During the forced closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Gardaland has continued to carry out maintenance work on the theme park with the intention of improving the experience of different attractions for guests. The work has included replacing old tracks with new ones on the Shaman roller coaster, renovation on the much-loved children's rides DoremiFarm and FunnyExpress and a makeover of the popular Volaplano attraction.



ADG completes third project at Cypress Springs Waterpark

AQUATIC Development Group (ADG), designers and builders of waterparks and water ride attractions, has completed its third project with the Gaylord Palms Resort and Convention Centre in Florida.

ADG designed, engineered and built Crystal River Rapids at the resort's Cypress Springs Waterpark. This was the third time ADG has worked with Gaylord Palms Resort and Convention Centre to build and expand the venue's waterpark and pool area.

ADG worked closely with the resort to create the new action river that appeals to families as well as business travellers. As well as the new Crystal River Rapids, the extension of the waterpark included new private cabanas, a food and drinks buildings, additional day beds and a premium pool seating area.

Johann Kriegar, general manager at Gaylord Palms, said: "We are so excited for our guests to experience our brand-new action river Crystal River Rapids. With spring break coming up, it's the perfect time to plan a getaway to enjoy our one-of-a-kind Cypress Springs Water Park where you can relax at our South Beach Pool or enjoy our thrilling drop and racing slides, FlowRider Surfing Experience, new action river and more."



Endless Surf facility to be developed on Australia's Gold Coast

THE Club at Parkwood Village, a leisure destination on Australia's Gold Coast, is to add a new development to the venue. Plans are in place to expand the sport and family activity hub with an Endless Surf facility.

Endless Surf is developed by WhiteWater, which has been building surf pools since 1989. Using enhanced pneumatic technology, Endless Surf features rolling sets, designed for operational ease, as well as flexibility, high capacity and safety. Boasting a compact size, fewer resources are required to build Endless Surf and less water is needed to operate it.

Luke Altschwager, managing director and founder of Parkwood, commented: "There is nothing more quintessentially Australian than surfing and this new technology creating customised, repeatable, man-made waves is going to revolutionise the sport. I want to make sure Parkwood becomes the heart of the sport here on the Gold Coast. Not only is a world class surf pool a perfect fit for our active community, it anchors a whole new level of economic investment in the area," he said.

As well as a realistic surf experience, Parkwood plans to expand its hospitality, medical and commercial services and develop a new hotel and residential apartments that will look out over the Endless Surf pool. It is hoped the development at Parkwood will be completed by 2023.

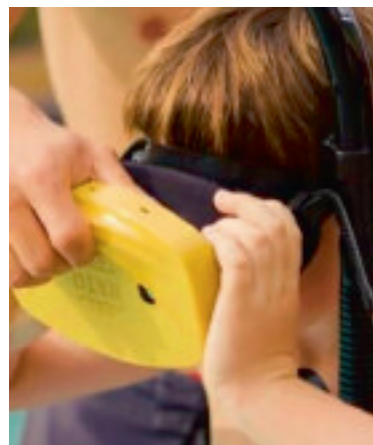


Ballast introduces new virtual reality attractions for waterparks

BALLAST, providers of virtual reality products for waterparks, has introduced two brand-new attractions designed to create memorable experiences for guests and boost revenue for waterpark operators. The virtual reality attractions are known as VRSlide and DIVR.

VRSlide is hailed as the first system in the world to add new visual dimensions to existing waterslides. The system is equipped with 25 virtual reality headsets. The Ballast team digitalises a waterpark's slide path and creates virtual reality worlds that are specifically tailored to a slide path. SplashSync Sensors are installed at points where riders experience different movement patterns on the slide.

DIVR is designed to enable waterparks to unlock new possibilities in their pool. DIVR VR Snorkelling is sold as a system of equipment to waterparks and resorts, without any requirements for permanent infrastructure changes to begin operation. The DIVR content options allow guests to discover the sensation of flying, floating and swimming through enchanted virtual worlds.





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Pirates in Batavia, Europa-Park, Germany

By David Whitworth

AT the end of July, 2020, a much beloved attraction reopened in Europa-Park, located in Rust, south-western Germany – Pirates in Batavia.

The attraction, which originally opened its doors in 1987, had been re-opened and restored to its former glory following a terrible fire which swept through the original ride building; a modern-day phoenix from the flames, rising to give the park's wonderfully themed port city of Batavia a new lease of life.

The ride is located in the Netherlands area of the park. Its story depicts a pirate attack by the Dutch invading Jakarta in Indonesia from the seventeenth century, creating the colonisation of Indonesia by the Dutch.

Michael Mack



A thorough renovation took place when the attraction closed its doors on May 26, 2018. An investment in “the high, double-digit millions,” according to the park, was made with the ride redeveloped and reinvigorated in just a 24 month time frame before making a welcome return.

Pirates in Batavia is a nostalgic dark ride. It is an all absorbing adventure where passengers travel by boat and are transported to another world, the exotic world of Batavia. Riders, or “landlubbers,” set sail on a journey which lasts around eight minutes. The prominent skull and crossbones flag at the ride entrance confirms pirates await and complements the authentic brick designed entrance building fitted effectively with lanterns and a majestic compass wheel on a stained glass window. Upon entry, the queue area has a vibrant, glowing ambience. It is beautifully themed, full of pirate effects such as a huge suspended model pirate ship, cannons, a mass of ship barrels and an impressive animatronic pirate sharing various tales. This preview show allows visitors to immerse themselves in the story and really get a feel of what “treasures” lie ahead.

The attraction depicts various scenes, from rainforests to a well crafted Indonesian town which is impressively illuminated with a star-filled ceiling draped with multi coloured hanging lanterns. Its highlights include swashbuckling fight scenes and a flurry of shipwrecked boats, castle forts, dimly-lit lanterns, crocodiles and

monkeys and of course, numerous pirates. Digital water fountain projections, thunderstorm effects with lightning strikes and voiceovers heighten riders' senses which resonate being encapsulated in another world.

The ride has been given a makeover with some added twists from its original layout but there are still elements from its predecessor. The rocking wooden boats add authenticity and a lantern placed at the front of each one flickers on and off through each scene to great effect. Pirate passengers are taken out of their comfort zone with a secret drop but overall Batavia is a smooth passage through an Indonesian bygone time.

The ride's visuals are highly impressive with over 80 exhibits, LED screens, projection mapping and 100 animatronics, eight coming from the original attraction. Over eight tons of theming is authentic decoration from Indonesia. There are 32 smoke detectors with 300 smoke extraction points, while the powerful sprinkler system gushes out 15,000 litres of water per minute at 10 bar pressure. Simply put, Pirates in Batavia is at the cutting edge of technology.

The attraction's specification consists of a track length of 500m (1,400ft) travelling at a sedate 1.8mph (2.9km/h). It seats 16 passengers per boat with four riders in each of four rows. Altogether there are 22 boats and the ride has a capacity of 1,800 guests per hour. Its main drop is 5m (16ft) and the ride area in total spans 3,800sq.m (41,000sq.ft). From an aquatic standpoint, its water surface covers 2,500sq.m, while its water volume is 2,000cu.m (1,800,000 litres).

It is no surprise to see the ride is so fondly cherished for its spectacular features and overall ride experience and Michael Mack, managing partner at Europa-Park, spoke to *InterPark* about the redevelopment project and the attraction's reopening.

"We were very happy to be able to celebrate this memorable event," he said. "The fire and the loss of the unique attraction had torn a deep hole in our hearts. It is all the more wonderful that the Pirates in Batavia are back at Europa-Park – now even bigger, more beautiful and more exciting."

The ride was reopened at a glitzy ceremony with the presence of members of the Mack family, alongside Paola Felix and Guido Wolf, Minister of Justice, Tourism and Europe. It is a favourite attraction of the Mack family, which is clear to see from the love they show towards their fabled ride. When describing the emotional impact of losing the attraction and its subsequent renovation, Mack added:



"We know about the importance of this ride, not just for us as the Mack family, but for hundreds and thousands of visitors, who wouldn't visit Europa-Park without riding Pirates in Batavia. It is one of the attractions that brings several generations together, as often the parents will have been on the ride as children themselves and are now bringing their own children to experience the ride.

"To see it go up in flames was very emotional, not just for us, but in fact for many of our fans. The number of letters and messages we received in the days, weeks and months after the fire was incredible and truly heart-warming. We knew that we had to get the renovation right and that we had to bring back this very important piece of Europa-Park history."

So what challenges did the project face?

The four managing partners of Europa-Park, Roland, Jürgen, Thomas and Michael Mack, in a boat from Pirates in Batavia. The rebuilt attraction opened at the end of July 2020.





"As you know, the attraction was almost completely destroyed in the devastating fire in 2018," Michael Mack told *InterPark*. "Once the smoke had cleared and we saw the extent of the damage, it was a shock. But it didn't take us long to decide that we wanted to bring this attraction back, even better than before. So, the challenge really was to make sure that we didn't disappoint our guests, who know this attraction so well. Technology has developed incredibly since we first opened the ride. We wanted to make sure to make use of all the new possibilities while keeping the character and the heart of the original attraction. To not overdo it, if you want. I think we found a perfect balance.

"We have also come a long way in our story telling in the park and so we used the opportunity of the redevelopment

of Pirates in Batavia to create a story in line with our Adventure Club of Europe," Mack continued. "The infamous secret society of discoverers and adventurers seeks to research and explain the unknown and the mysterious. The founding

father of the club, Bartholomeus van Robbmond, takes the guests on a journey to find the Fire Tiger, a magical dagger that makes his wielder invulnerable. It was said to be somewhere in Batavia in the 18th century and Robbmond made it his life's mission to find it. Naturally, the journey was full of challenges, not least the fight against his nemesis Cortez. Will Robbmond prevail with the help of his trusted companion Jopie, a cheeky otter? Well, I invite you all to come and see for yourselves."

And why is the attraction so cherished and beloved as a park favourite for the Mack family.

"Because the attraction was state of the art when it first opened in 1987 and was still a strong visitor magnet until its very last days before the fire. It kept its magic over decades and never stopped to amaze our guests, no matter how old. It is a ride which takes you on a journey, allows you to dream away and relax for some eight minutes and takes you into a different world. It is a family attraction in every sense of the word and therefore a perfect representation of what Europa-Park stands for."

At the time *InterPark* discussed this very significant project with Mack, the coronavirus pandemic continued to impact on parks around the world. Of course at Europa-Park, in addition to the theme park itself, there are other elements of the business that operate throughout the year,



including several hotels and the Rulantica waterpark. So how is the park tackling the coronavirus restrictions?

"It has been and still is the most challenging time in the history of our company and for all other parks and entertainment businesses out there," Mack said. "We have invested a lot in new measures and infrastructure in order to limit the risk of infection. We have introduced technology solutions, such as the VirtualLine, our new digital queueing system, contactless entry with mobile tickets, date-specific tickets to manage visitor numbers, etc. Ultimately, we had to reinvent the way we operate.

"We also work very closely with the authorities and are in constant dialogue about any new developments and what impact these may have on us. We feel well prepared and have proven during the month that we were open last summer, that our measures work and that we are able to provide a safe experience. We can't wait to be able to open again and to welcome back our visitors."

It is not only Pirates in Batavia that has received a makeover; the park's flagship restaurant Bamboe Baai has also been restored. In a novel concept created some years ago, guests can actually watch the boats of Pirates in

Batavia glide past them while they dine as the restaurant is located on a quaint terrace decking towards the end of the ride's journey. A warm blue neon light protracts around the final set scene making for a superb nighttime glow. It is a stunning setting, as Europa-Park describes: "21 years after the opening of Pirates in Batavia, park visitors from 2008 were able to embark on a culinary journey through south east Asia with the inauguration of Bamboe Baai."

There is also a live show which takes place at the end of the circuit while the ride is in motion, adding further charm to the attraction. "Bamboe Baai is perfectly embedded in the Pirates' route, so restaurant visitors themselves become part of the final scene of Pirates in Batavia. The interior offers space for up to 160 guests and another 30 people can enjoy their bowl under the open sky between the redesigned Amsterdam house facades. In addition, the Batavia Inn is a takeaway offer for Asian delicacies on-the-go," states the park.

Pirates in Batavia is a wondrous attraction which takes visitors on an unforgettable leisurely voyage through a discovery of delights. Long may it continue to do so.



Movie Park Germany immerses visitors in movie making with Intamin's Multi-Dimension Coaster

By Michael Mascioni



HYBRID interactive and immersive attractions are adding key new dimensions to experiential entertainment in amusement and theme parks and heralding the arrival of more multi-faceted immersive attractions in parks.

Intamin's Multi-Dimension Coaster for Movie Park Germany is a prime example of this trend. The attraction combines a more versatile coaster experience with a highly immersive multi-media dark ride, allowing guests to explore and engage with movie making in new ways.

According to a spokeswoman for Movie Park Germany, the park's decision to employ this approach was based on extensive research with its visitors, which led the venue to conclude that "the new attraction is a perfect fit for our target group. We conducted extensive visitor surveys to

give our guests a special surprise on the occasion of the park's 25th anniversary and respond to the wishes of our target group. Based on qualitative and quantitative surveys, the park team worked together with numerous families and survey participants to determine which attractions were particularly in demand. The results were very clear – among the most popular attractions were family coasters without inversions and dark rides. With the new Multi-Dimension Coaster, Movie Park is now combining the two most desired and popular attraction types and elements in our surveys."

The park's spokeswoman further explains the target audience for the attraction as follows: "Families are the main target group for the ride. The new attraction is



not a thrill ride but a family coaster without inversions. However, as Movie Park Germany also sees itself as a hybrid park, there will be some action elements too, making the ride more spectacular. Due to its overall theme and many interesting route elements, the new Hollywood ride is geared to young people as well and constitutes an attraction for different generations. Overall, the ride is suitable for families and teenagers too."

And she continued: "We decided for a Hollywood theme and storyline to match the DNA and motto of our park even more and to strengthen Movie Park Germany's brand. The Movie Park Studios will underline our motto 'Hollywood in Germany' to a greater extent and fit the overall image and concept of the park."

The attraction will open "when hardware and theming are finalised and integrated and all special effects are programmed. As a result, we expect the attraction to probably open this summer. The new Multi-Dimension Coaster will be situated right next to the Nickland area and fits in perfectly with its family-related overall approach."

The coaster vehicles travel "up to 60km/h and about 11km/h in the dark ride area, with a theoretical hourly capacity of 900 people per hour," reports an Intamin spokesperson. She points out that the coaster "affords 360 degree free motion control and two acceleration sections forwards and backwards, which were all developed specifically for the attraction." The coaster/



dark ride comprises three trains, with 12 seats per train, and was developed factoring in all the requirements given by the park, such as stops, the combination of indoor and outdoor environments and the accommodation of slow scenes to extend the ride-time. It offers multiple versions of media content.

The dark ride dominates the new addition, with 80 per cent of the attraction in a dark ride environment and only a small outdoor section that leads the coaster over the queue line and big studio gate of the entrance area. The attraction's setting within the park is the 3,800sq.m hall which formerly housed Ice Age Adventure and the horror maze Wrong Turn. As the Intamin spokesperson points out, "the attraction offers many different effects, including sound effects, wind, smell, pepper ghost effects,

animations and physical effects." It also uses large screens and plasma screens, while she also points out that "VR and AR weren't planned for the attraction, as it's characterised by a live experience and major sets. Visitors are supposed to experience the ride in its 'real' environment."

Guests will have an opportunity to explore in depth the movie-making experience through the attraction and will be guided by characters on their journey. As the park representative explained: "The new coaster will lead guests through a total of 12 different scenes, all taking place at the fictional studio lot of the famous 'Movie Park Studios,' where some sets will also be reminiscent of well-known movie scenes. "While in line, guests will explore some of the studio's production offices, including the set design and art departments. The sets during the ride will



The park also made a special effort to offer varied and compelling movie experiences with glamorous Hollywood studios and other film production studios being key features of the ride. With such an approach, it could ensure plenty of variety and incorporate many different film genres, all resulting in different immersive sets. The resulting overall environment helps shape the whole attraction and makes the storytelling very coherent so that guests can enjoy an intense experience.

In the process of selecting movie scenes for the attraction, Movie Park oriented itself towards well-known Hollywood blockbusters and real working studio environments. However, the new ride is not an IP-based attraction; Movie Park itself will be the IP of the new attraction. The new family coaster for the park's 25th anniversary pays tribute to the past and, at the same time, represents a new step towards a vision of the park's future.



include a journey from the film archive through the special effects department to the sound department and many more departments. Our guests will be integrated into the storyline as well. New characters designed for a broad target audience will also accompany and entertain visitors on their adventure in the Movie Park Studios."

In order to amplify the realism of the attraction's movie experience, Movie Park's creative team travelled to famous Hollywood Studios in California during the conceptual stage of the project to ensure the greatest possible authenticity for the new Multi-Dimension Coaster and to implement the studio theme as realistically as possible. The new coaster will be spectacularly staged with a matching storyline, studio and set theming, as well as multi-media and lots of effects for all senses.



An interview with Liu Xi Wang, Jinma Entertainment Corp. Ltd. By Lily Zhang



I recently visited Jinma Entertainment Corp. Ltd. in China to talk with Liu Xi Wang who currently serves as the general manager of the company, overseeing amusement ride design, engineering and production. As a co-founder of the company, over the years he has built up a strong technical team whose works you can find in almost every major amusement park in China. My first impression of Mr. Liu is his modesty and the fact he laughs a lot! And he has plenty to say about the industry as I discovered during my discussions with him.

InterPark: It is rumoured Jinma supplied a few rides to a world-class resort in Beijing? I guess it will be open to the public sometime this year. Is that correct?

Liu: Yes. We have built three medium-sized rides for this park. Very interesting rides, well-designed and themed in an attractive way. Currently we are wrapping up field works there.

IP: It is also rumoured that Jinma is the only China-based ride supplier for the park, which is quite something. Why did they only choose Jinma among all the other China-based suppliers?

Liu: Because we are able to design and build a ride to their rigid standards. The rides we provide are just as good as any imported brands. We built two rides for another world-class resort a few years ago. I believe that is why we were able to win the bidding for the project in the first place. Additionally, in March we signed another contract with a world-class resort in Singapore.

IP: That must be very encouraging for you as it is a rare thing, isn't it?

Liu: It is about capability and recognition. Jinma has been in the industry for over three decades. We started humbly but were able to build up our design, engineering and manufacturing capabilities gradually by designing and making products for domestic park operators in China. It is a long trial and error process but we learned our lessons and built up our knowledge base. I guess Jinma is gaining recognition from those world-class parks.

IP: So what do you consider when designing a ride?

Liu: I have a very interesting theory about this. We consider three kinds of experience that an attraction can have on visitors when designing a ride. They are experiences respectively at physiological, sensory and emotional levels. In most cases, one or two of the said experiences is used to guide the development of a ride attraction.

IP: Can you elaborate on the three types of “experience”?

Liu: I actually wrote a paper on it which was published in an academic journal. If a ride is planned to focus on a purely physiological experience for the visitors, we design and develop it leaning towards increased magnitude and density of motions as well as motion variety. Following this train of thought, we would build a roller coaster higher and faster, or a pendulum ride to swing higher with more motion varieties. This approach is meant to create physiological challenges for visitors. It is about bigger, higher and faster. Conventional park rides usually fall into this category.

IP: I guess I’ve ridden plenty of them. Kind of discomfoting though if I’m honest.

Liu: Yes, it draws on your adrenalin. Too much of it makes you feel tense and uncomfortable. But they are real darlings to teenagers and thrill seekers. When we design a ride attraction focusing on sensory experience, we tend to design and incorporate various sensory stimulants into a real conventional ride, such as visual, acoustic, smell and tactile. In this arrangement, passengers are able to shuttle between virtual and real realities and lose themselves when the world boundaries are blurred. We installed a number of rides of this kind in China – custom-made, multi-sensory roller coasters, multi-sensory tower rides and more. They are very popular.

IP: I rode your goggle-free Wild Adventure at your exhibition centre. Does that belong to this category?

Liu: Not really, but it is a good ride. It comes with a better simulator. What you feel is almost real. There are lots of 3D screen, 4D cinemas, VR and other similar technology-based attractions on the market which use multi-sensory stimulation. However, the problem with it is that if you strip off all the fancy special effects, what is left is probably just a motion simulator, instead of a real mechanical ride. That means any physiological experience you have is not real. It may even feel funny or fake somehow. Sensory illusions may fool you, but physiological reaction is largely allowed by your subliminal mechanism which is primal and is not easily fooled.

IP: Wow, it is deep stuff! What is the third type of experience like?

Liu: Ride attractions built with this approach owe their huge popularity to the fact that they appeal to people’s emotions. Big-time theme parks and themed projects win over people with their ability to deliver an emotional experience. For example, Disneyland’s success is fed upon people’s fantasies. In each “dreamland,” you are able to literally escape from your everyday mundane life and stay in a dreamland even for just an hour or two. It appeals directly to our inner child which yearns for simple happiness. The feelings it invokes are so strong that they will stay with you forever.

IP: I have been to Disneyland a couple of times. It is just so enchanting; I was totally lost there.

Liu: It wakes up your inner child. It is a tour to your dream world. On the market, you will see rides like Flying Theatres, installations like the Flyer-San Francisco and Fly-over Jiangxi. They also play tricks on people’s emotions. Those amusement projects include more emotional elements and visitors are able to immerse themselves and react emotionally to the grandness, beauty, culture and humanity of a specific place. I guess if there was “high art” in our amusement industry, these kinds of rides or attractions would be among them. We founded a subsidiary a few years back, fully devoted to developing and making rides of the Flying Theatre type. We have a few installations in China and they are proven to be popular. To sum up, to build a good attraction, a memorable one, we should not stop short at entertaining people in physiological and sensory aspects. We must incorporate elements that invoke emotions. The experience that a visitor has should be from all those three aspects.

IP: Thanks for sharing those valuable insights. So are there any big projects that you have been working on recently or are currently working on?

Liu: There are some interesting projects. Our production schedules are really tight. Our 3D bending machine just works non-stop. We are one of the few ride manufacturers around the world who have this kind of machine in use. Good roller coasters must have smooth tracks. This machine makes smooth tracks. At our other premises we also have quite a few advanced machines, including welding robots and 3D engraving machines for making fibreglass reinforced pieces.

2021 theme park trends: a look at US and UK visitor demands

By Mel Taylor, CEO, Omnico Group



AS the world reacted to the coronavirus outbreak, we saw countries respond in vastly different ways. For sectors like the attractions industry, this meant varying degrees of closures and business impact.

While attractions in the US were up and running for longer than most in 2020 – and many have already reopened – theme parks in Britain only operated briefly during the summer and remained closed until mid-April.

These differences affected local attractions in unique ways, but global theme parks are now faced with similar challenges: driving safety, encouraging visitors back and regaining lost revenue. Understanding how the pandemic has changed visitor expectations, and meeting them, is crucial if parks are to overcome these challenges and recover in 2021.

To uncover some answers, at Omnico we recently asked over 2,500 UK and US theme park visitors whether

they're ready to return and what measures, incentives and experiences they now expect to see from attractions in light of COVID-19.

Here's what we learned and what theme parks should be doing to overcome two core challenges facing them this year.

Boosting theme park traffic

Visitor numbers were hard hit across the board in 2020, even for parks that remained open throughout the summer season. A poll of our customers revealed 89 per cent experienced a considerable drop in footfall since the pandemic and remain concerned about its ongoing impact on visitor numbers.

It's a grounded reservation, especially with 78 per cent of theme park goers reluctant to return to attractions in 2021 and 27 per cent ruling out trips to parks entirely.

Even with vaccines rolling out, consumer confidence won't be immediately restored. Businesses cannot rely on pent up demand to boost traffic. Instead, encouraging people back through the gates depends on safeguarding visitors throughout their trip.

With 60 per cent of US and 57 per cent of UK consumers citing crowds as their top concern – followed by the ability to socially distance (52 per cent and 55 per cent, respectively) – parks need to prove they're opening responsibly; especially as two in five (39 per cent) worry attractions are more focused on recouping revenue than ensuring safety. Here, technology is key; our research shows more than half of theme park goers (52 per cent in the UK and 60 per cent in the US) say technology to address COVID-19 safety is needed and would make them more likely to visit.

As a result, tech-driven measures, like contactless entry, mobile apps, pay-at-table and self-scan checkouts, are now considered must-haves by the majority of US and UK visitors, so parks should invest in similar solutions to secure a steady stream of visitors.

Some parks are already leading by example – in the US, Disney is offering reserved park entry, safety barriers and mobile food and drink orders – but we'll need to see these moves replicated across the industry if parks are to bounce back.

Banking on visitor loyalty

With footfall threatening to remain relatively low throughout 2021, theme parks need to make the most of their loyal visitors. Plus, with the pandemic hindering international travel, many tourists won't make it to theme parks abroad, meaning businesses need to maximise the value of local visitors to stay afloat.

Attractions must drive loyalty by offering personalised experiences based on guests' preferences, past trips or purchases. Our data shows this would make the vast majority of UK and US theme park goers (88 per cent and 92 per cent) more likely to visit.

Not only will personalised offers encourage people back, but they can also drive repeat visits. Our research found, for UK visitors, off-peak ticket prices appeal the most, while free or discounted return visits top the list of preferred perks in the US. Some parks are even taking personalisation a step further. Chessington World of Adventures, in Surrey, UK, for example, is inviting visitors to upload photos of their own faces (in surprised expressions) and printing these on bespoke face masks so as not to let safety measures spoil mid-ride souvenir snaps!

However it's approached, theme parks are sitting on a wealth of data to enable personalised interactions with visitors. Every time a guest visits your venue, eats at your restaurants, shops in your stores or enjoys your rides, they're generating data you can use to improve their experience and entice them back.

When it comes to loyalty, enabling visitors to collect and redeem rewards throughout your venue is now a must, as demanded by 42 per cent of UK visitors and 33 per cent in the US. Our research even revealed that cross-touchpoint loyalty would encourage both American and British consumers to spend more on food and merchandise (33 per cent and 24 per cent). To be successful at this, ticketing systems, POS or order-ahead tech must all feed into each other, enabling visitors to seamlessly earn and redeem perks – allowing attractions businesses to boost traffic and profits.

Regional differences, global challenges

Regardless of regional differences, theme parks just faced one of their toughest years to date, with IAAPA estimating a \$23bn revenue drop. 2021 is set to be another challenging period, so attractions worldwide must be safer and more engaging in order to emerge successful on the other side.



Legacy Entertainment weaves immersive theatre and escape games into dark ride/themed attraction concepts

By Michael Mascioni

EFFORTS to reinvent dark rides and themed attractions abound, but few companies have taken as unconventional an approach as Legacy Entertainment in recent years. The company ventured into bold new territory with its attractions Pacific Rim: Shatterdome Strike and Road Rage.

Shatterdome Strike, which Legacy bills as the first “immersive theatre dark ride,” marries the dark ride concept with immersive theatre in new ways. It “debuted at Trans Studio Cibubur, near Jakarta, Indonesia, in July 2019,” reports Eric Carnaghey, Legacy Entertainment’s managing director. He notes that “the attraction utilises Oceaneering’s EVO-6 vehicle – kind of a scaled down version of the ride system used for The Amazing Adventures of Spiderman ride. It runs 20 minutes long and can accommodate around 600 guests per hour.”

During the experience, “guests come face-to-face with three new Kaiju foes as they accompany the Pan Pacific Defense Corp’s first Mark VII Jaeger, a giant, human-piloted mech suit created to defend the planet from the rise of the Kaiju. Riders take control of the mobile weapon through a combination of 3D film sequences, practical effects and a new, state-of-the-art ride vehicle.”

Carnaghey explained the prime motivation behind this attraction, saying: “It’s very important to us at Legacy Entertainment to advance the themed entertainment medium. We have zero interest in replicating anything someone else has done, or repeating ourselves. Because of this, on every project we pursue we look for ways to break new ground and give guests something they weren’t expecting. Luckily, with our Trans Studio projects, we were paired with a client who felt the exact same way and inherently understood the value of taking calculated risks.”

Part of the distinctiveness of the attraction, according to Carnaghey, is that it’s far more an experience than just a dark ride. It takes place in four segments spanning nearly

20 action-packed minutes and guests are only aboard a ride vehicle for two of those.

The attraction also expanded far beyond the storyline of the original Pacific Rim media film in 2013. As Carnaghey explained, “something that was really great about working with Legendary Entertainment, the film studio behind the Pacific Rim franchise, was their openness to expanding the official Pacific Rim canon. Working together, we developed all-new Kaiju and Jaeger characters, which are now officially part of the Pacific Rim universe and can only be seen, so far, in a theme park setting.”

The attraction’s special effects and interactive sequences helped create a more dynamic, immersive experience. According to Carnaghey, “in addition to the 3D film sequences, the attraction’s journey is filled with a wide array of 4D special effects, including heat, wind and foam, among others. Beyond that, during one of the immersive theatre sequences, guests are handed flashlights and must navigate the corridors of an out-of-commission dark ride. We’re always looking for ways to surprise our riders.”

The attraction has proven to be a “huge hit with guests of all ages, though our initial target audience was teens and young adults,” Carnaghey adds.

Legacy Entertainment was set on taking the stunt show ride concept in new directions with Road Rage, which “debuted in December, 2019, at Trans Studio Bali,” says Taylor Jeffs, the company’s president. It accommodates “around 600 guests per hour and lasts about 12 to 15 minutes, depending on how fast guests solve the Escape Room pre-show.” The stunt show, which uses live stunt performers, is blended with a dark ride.

According to Jeffs: “In the process of figuring out how to achieve this idea of a ‘stunt show dark ride,’ we benchmarked the wide swath of Halloween experiences in the themed entertainment sector. All of these, from Universal’s Halloween Horror Nights to Knott’s Halloween Haunted, feature dramatic stunt-style effects that are performed in high-repetition for hours at a time. If something could work in that setting, it could work alongside a dark ride.”

And he explained the introduction of an escape room element into the Road Rage experience as follows: “Frankly, the typical theme park pre-show trope is tired and considering the much greater sophistication of modern audiences, some pre-shows have become almost insulting. The specific idea to use Escape Rooms was reverse engineered from the story. Road Rage is a high-octane break out and chase and it was only logical that the break out story would begin in a prison cell.”

The future of immersive media in amusement and theme parks

By Michael Mascioni

THE landscape for immersive media in amusement and theme parks has shifted considerably over the past few years, as the very concept of amusement parks has been redefined and reinvented. Amusement and theme parks are no longer strictly tied to traditional rides and attractions – they now encompass art parks such as Wisdome LA, the micro-amusement parks of Two Bit Circus and other park models. As competition in the amusement park market and overall entertainment markets has intensified, a premium has been placed on the development of more engaging, participatory and diverse experiences in parks.

In this context, immersive experiences have become a key element in this new park world. But immersiveness is increasingly integrated in parks in many different ways. To address these dramatic changes and future trends in the use of immersive media in parks, I wrote a scenario chapter on the future of immersive media in parks for the book *50:50 – Scenarios for the next 50 years*, published by Fast Future Publishing and to be released in July. The chapter presents a scenario of the potential use of VR, AR, 3D projection mapping and other immersive technologies in parks in 2038, along with a review of key current trends in the application of immersive technologies in parks.

Some of the key long term trends discussed in the chapter include:

- The increasing impact of hybrid physical/virtual immersive experiences in parks, such as experiences combining traditional attractions like rides with virtual experiences such as video games and games with immersive live theatre.
- The greater impact of hybrid immersive entertainment forms in parks, such as virtual escape games, VR laser tag and AR drone games. Traditional escape games have already made a mark in parks, attracting more diverse audiences, including young adults. VR laser tag has already been introduced in location-based entertainment centres and video arcades.
- The increasing appearance of immersive attractions in new and unusual environments, such as space and underwater. Some manifestations of this trend are already evident, such as the underwater VR snorkeling experiences at Kalahari waterpark.
- The development of parks focusing on less traditional content, such as art, wellness and spirituality. Once again, some examples of this trend are already evident, such as

Themed Entertainment's first walkthrough ride created by CAVU Designwerks



the proliferation of art and creativity parks in the past few years, like teamLab's Future Park.

- The introduction of more varied social immersive experiences in parks.
- The emergence of more immersive user-generated experiences in parks.
- The increasing appearance of immersive experiences and attractions integrated into physical structures and environments, reflecting the trend towards greater "ambient interactivity" in leisure facilities.
- The increasing appearance of blended park/in-home immersive experiences and tools, as illustrated by the VRstudios sports platform offered by VR studios connecting in-home VR gameplay with out-of-home entertainment experiences.
- The increasing impact of haptic technology on immersive attractions, especially VR attractions, in parks in order to provide more tactile experiences. Greater interest in haptics in parks is evidenced, for example, by the patent Disney has filed for a haptic floor system.

As these diverse trends indicate immersive attractions will constitute a much larger component of amusement and theme parks over the coming decades and the parameters of those attractions will dramatically expand in scope. The chapter I wrote for the 50:50 book is designed to provide some trend guideposts to consider when planning future immersive attractions and experiences.



Guest service is not an extreme sport

By Chris Smoje

Image courtesy
Funtown
Splashtown

YEARS ago, when I was working in the attractions industry, I overheard a conversation between a guest and a team member on the telephone. The guest had phoned the attraction with a query which was slightly unusual, although not uncommon. She wanted to know “How cold is the water on the waterslides?” Fair question, right? For some guests, this would be important to know.

The only challenging part is there are so many variables to this question which makes every answer the wrong answer. If you knew the exact temperature and said “34 degrees,” what if the guest didn’t know what 34 degrees felt like. If you said heated, what about the wind factor at the top of the waterslides that would make the water on bathers feel ice cold. If you were clever and said “comfortable,” how would you know what the other person finds as comfortable? And as you can imagine, the call didn’t really work out – the team member and customer were both left frustrated.

After this phone call, I had a look at the language we used and decided to trial a different word the next time a similar call was received. And sure enough that call came through at some point in the future. When the guest asked “How cold is the water” the team member responded with the word “moderate.” And the guest said “Ok, thank you” and the call was over without any fuss.

Let’s explore the word “moderate.” The word is defined as being “not extreme” and we hear it a lot particularly on the weather reports. In the words of the three bears, it’s not too hot, not too cold, just somewhere in the middle.

Ever since then, I’ve been thinking about the word “moderate” especially in the area of customer service and customer service training. I’ve been an educator for over 15 years now and one of the biggest issues I face when delivering any form of customer service training is that it works too well. And this is a big problem!

When we look at organisational culture, many industries are full of rules and regulations. When new employees start in the business they are often told to follow policies and procedures – the attractions industry is full of them and rightfully so. Many of the attractions require strict and safe operation and therefore this focus is completely justified.

On the flip side, when you look at something like customer service, the messages received in training are treated as if they are policy. For instance, if you encourage interaction with guests, the resistance is usually around how talking to guests takes more time and creates more queues and is inefficient. This is because most people think in a very binary way. Binary meaning yes/no, right/wrong, on/off, good/bad, start/finish and so on.

This binary thinking applies to everything else in customer service too. People will immediately jump to the “extreme” level which is not only unsustainable, but unworkable as well. If we fundamentally want our team to improve and become great at service, we need to instil the right disciplines to keep people at the “moderate” and not “extreme” levels of service. I’ve said before, customer service is not black or white, but rather grey.

The five disciplines that I will introduce help us stay grounded and not veer off too far in either extreme direction by being too prescriptive, or too loose around the ideas of service.

Low Extreme	Discipline	High Extreme
Ignorant	Aware	Distrusting
Partial	Thorough	Obsessive
Hesitant	Calculated	Careless
Calm	Patient	Anxious
Irreverent	Sensible	Serious

1. Be aware, not ignorant or distrusting:

Exceptional customer service is all about having a good awareness of others around us, knowing what our customers are up to and doing, so we can be prepared for them. We must look at each customer as a unique individual and not under a label like all other customers. It's so common though, for team members to be ignorant of customers around them, turning away to do an admin task but not noticing the customer approaching the counter from 100m away. Or, treating the customer who asks for a refund as the customer who's "trying to scam us." We need to be aware of these customers and be trusting in the first place.

2. Be thorough, not partial or obsessive:

The phrase "customer obsession" has been used far too much. I see the point, but do you really think people are obsessed about their customers. It's unattainable and not healthy. On the other hand, how often do we find that the person serving us doesn't complete what they need to do? Or something is missing and we must follow it up. The best thing to do here is to adopt a discipline of being thorough in our work. Making sure we don't cut corners, but also making sure we don't channel "Rufous the jeweller" (the character played by Rowan Atkinson in *Love Actually*).

3. Be calculated, not hesitant or careless:

There is a myriad of situations that can be thrown at us in our daily work. Some things take us by surprise and some things can trigger us to bring out our worst. Sometimes not speaking up or saying something out of fear the customer will react negatively will simply postpone their negative reaction until later. Or saying something reactive in the moment can end in customer complaints and even disciplinary action. When dealing with customers it is best to be calculated. Take the time to think about how we should respond or deal with a situation and then do so.



Image courtesy Futuroscope

4. Be patient, not calm or anxious:

When you work with others, everyone has their own version of what's important and what's pressing. I've witnessed the checkout operator who starts tapping their hands out of frustration because the customer is taking their time to unload their shopping basket. Or alternatively, I've seen the customer who storms up to a desk with a problem and the team member doesn't share the same sense of urgency as they channel a voice inside their head to "remain calm." Working with others requires us to be patient. Not just patient about time, but patient when dealing with problems without becoming annoyed or anxious.

5. Be sensible, not irreverent or serious:

Finally, service is not something that should be taken too seriously. Customers don't mind a laugh, people are all human and even protocols which are saved for the Royal Family can end in gaffes which are laughed off. Equally, customers all have emotions, things that go on behind the scenes which we need to be mindful of. We shouldn't be afraid that we might upset others, but we shouldn't be insensitive either. Service is all about common sense – something which is becoming far more prevalent today than even five years ago. Businesses are asked to do the right thing by the customer. The way policies were built years ago may not be relevant today and every customer's unique situation may not nicely fit into a policy like it did years ago.

Chris Smoje is a customer service expert, an alumni of the Disney Institute with theme park service leadership experience. Chris helps leaders and human resource teams create cultures that serve.

www.chrissmoje.com

Authors note:

This is the final article in the current series I have been writing for *InterPark*. I have thoroughly enjoyed putting "pen to paper" every two months for this publication over the last three years. To my count, this issue will be the 17th that I have contributed to in the area of guest service. For those regular readers, I hope each and every short article has been useful for you to take key ideas back to your attraction, wherever in the world it may be. The attractions industry is built upon exceptional guest service and while this article will be my last, the topic will always remain a priority for the industry. I myself will continue to be an avid reader of *InterPark* and look forward to the opportunity sometime in the future where I will contribute to this great publication again. In the meantime, if you would ever wish to engage in further discussions around guest service, I'm always happy for you to contact me directly at chris@chrissmoje.com



Image courtesy
Faarup
Sommerland

Ken Ellis



Ken Ellis, CEO, Aquatic Development Group

InterPark: Can you provide a brief history of ADG?

Ken Ellis: As an organisation ADG has been around for more than 50 years. Our founder, my father Herb Ellis, was very active in the commercial pool industry before transitioning the company exclusively into waterparks. ADG is the culmination of several companies that championed the idea of a designer lead design-build waterpark industry. My first job was working under my father building pools while in high school and then I continued my career full time for ADG in 1985. From then on, I worked alongside my father to grow the company and advance opportunities for ADG. I became president in 1996 and in 2005, a good friend and I took on an ownership role at Camelback Resort in Tannersville, PA. My position at Camelback

was beneficial for ADG because it allowed us to get a true understanding of resort and waterpark operations – something that sets us apart from other waterpark design/build companies in the industry. In 2019, we sold Camelback and I have been focusing on utilising my connections in the industry to further business development and project opportunities at ADG.

IP: What types of venue does ADG work with? Is it mainly waterparks?

KE: Our primary business is the waterpark industry, but we work with all types of aquatic related venues, including waterparks, hotels, resorts, campgrounds, RV resorts – anywhere there is a need for leisure water. We pride ourselves in our ability to understand successful resort projects and their business, which differentiates us from others in the industry.

IP: What would you say makes ADG stand out from other suppliers of similar products and services? What are your USPs?

KE: One of our biggest differentiators is that we don't start off by asking a client what sort of rides they need or how big they want their wavepool. We start off by figuring out what they are trying to accomplish, such as increased capacity, season pass sales, drive room sales, etc. Sometimes we'll have multiple conversations before we even discuss the topic of water. Our goal is to deliver a successful project and a successful project can't just look good, it needs to perform financially. Another asset we bring to our projects is efficiency. Getting a project open for a client is so important in order to capitalise on their initial season. If we can shorten development time to under 12 months, then that's what we are going to do. In order to further assist our clients, ADG has pivoted during the pandemic, assisting our clients with programme management – getting projects "teed" up with budgets, concepts, finance approval, etc., so that when they are ready to get moving on the project, we can hit the ground running.

IP: Can you provide two or three examples of some of the company's most recent projects or some you are currently working on?

KE: In 2019 we worked on the Kartrite Resort and Waterpark where we provided master planning services for the hotel and design/build for the 80,000sq.ft indoor waterpark project. In 2020 we designed and built the Soaky Mountain Waterpark in Tennessee for the Wilderness Group. This was a repeat client who told us in May/June 2019 that they wanted to open the park in 2020. ADG ran the entire project in Tennessee. This was the only new waterpark to open in North America during 2020. Beyond the obstacles the pandemic posed on this project, we also lost a total of 90 days of work time during the construction phase due to an abnormal amount of rainfall. Regardless of all these challenges, our construction team was able to get the project open on-time and on-budget.

Some other projects opening in 2021 are a renovation project at Kings Dominion and a river expansion at the Gaylord Palms in Kissimmee, FL. This is our third time working with this property and sixth project working with the Gaylord Hotel Group. In addition to our construction projects we've also sold and are opening eight FlowRider surf rides.

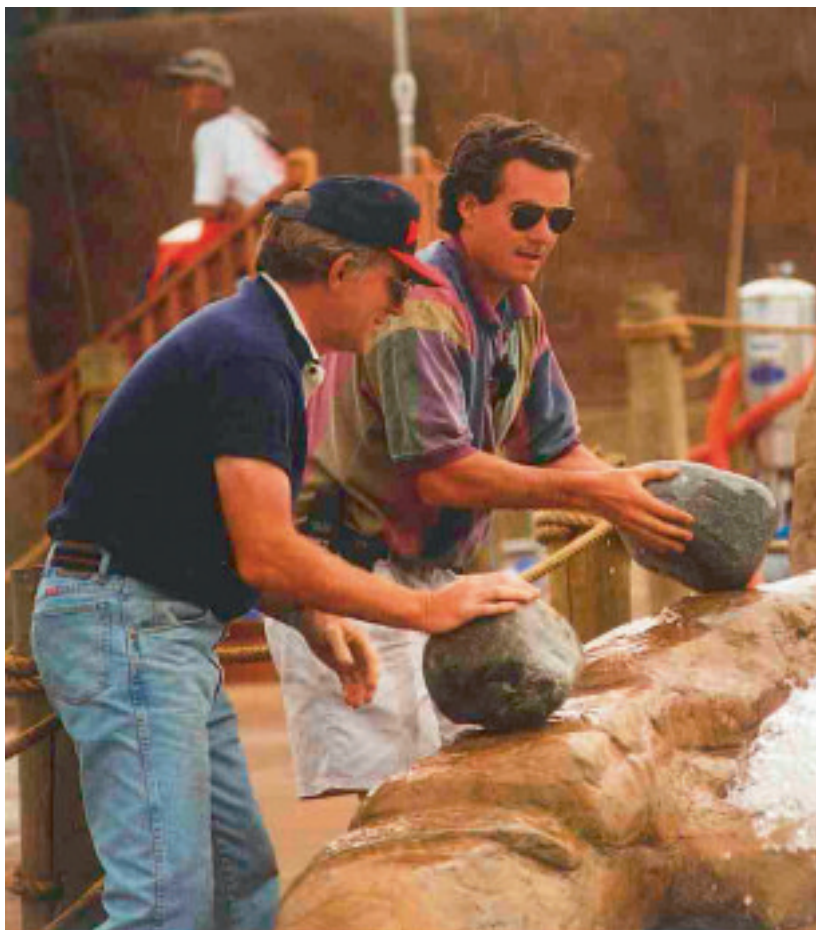


IP: How does ADG come up with its design and product solutions? Where do you start with a project and are the ideas you use usually inspired by requests from/the needs of individual operators and developers or do you more often start with a 'blank canvas'?

KE: At ADG we are always looking to create new opportunities and develop new solutions for our clients. A lot of our water ride attractions and designs have been driven by a client's need. We start by trying to understand the client's goals, who their customer base is, the sort of rides they want, the market they are aiming at, where they are located, as well as maximising the budget available.

IP: Prior to the global pandemic, what changes and/or trends were you seeing in the waterpark industry globally?

KE: We've been seeing domestically in the US that a lot of parks are looking at renovating areas or attractions within their park. A lot of these waterparks were built in the 70s and 80s and need updating. Internationally, a lot of countries are still underdeveloped with recreational water. There is still a lot of growth potential for waterparks internationally. Another big trend we've been seeing in the industry is the topic of surf pools – how they work, how to make them financially viable and what the business model looks like.



IP: How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted ADG's overall business to date?

KE: It's been tough on the industry as a whole. A lot of suppliers had a good 2020 with projects already booked, but 2021 will be harder for suppliers. Resorts and hotels have been hit particularly hard, while projects in areas with larger demographic areas might have done okay in 2020, because they draw from such a large pool of people. There will be pent up demand this year so operators will benefit. A good example of this is that skiing is going mad here in the north east US (at the time of writing); there is limited capacity but it is selling out every weekend. And as the vaccine continues to roll out, we are hopeful that this will help us and all our friends, partners and clients in the industry get back to a "normal" state of business. As mentioned, to deal with this challenge, our company is utilising some of our resources to assist in predevelopment work for our potential clients. When they are ready, we will be here as a resource. Another thing we have done during this pandemic is conduct R&D and product development. We are always looking for ways to improve our existing products and for creative new attractions to stay ahead of the curve.

IP: How do you see ADG and what the company offers developing in the future?

KE: The pandemic has allowed us to look at other things and to continue to better supply our clients on overall projects. For instance, we have a couple of RV campground projects we are working on and a potential project at a casino. Water recreation is the most popular form of entertainment globally because the experience is unique each time. On a roller coaster the experience is the same each time you ride but in water you are not contained so it's different. We are always looking to see how we can bring such experiences to different venues. We are looking forward, forging ahead and planning for the future.



Personally speaking

Not a lot of people know this but I am very good at ... offshore powerboat racing which I did in the 90s

The most interesting place I've ever been to is ... Great Bear Lake in the north west territory of Canada

Family aside, the prized possession I value above all others is ... my health, freedom and the flexibility my career has provided me

My favourite film is ... *Animal House* or the original *Rocky*

When I'm not working I like to ... be on the water

The person who has influenced me most is ... my father – in both his good and bad habits

My favourite musician/band is ... any live music

If I could invite a celebrity to dinner it would be ... Warren Buffet – but I also think Melania Trump would provide some interesting conversation!

My unfulfilled ambition is ... to travel more while I can

I really dislike ... Unkind, disrespectful people

Dutch Wonderland, US

PARK
LIFE



DUTCH Wonderland is a Pennsylvania, US, theme park designed for families with young children. With over 35 fun-filled rides and attractions, Duke's Lagoon water play area, Exploration Island and live entertainment, Dutch Wonderland offers a host of fun things to see and do.

Having opened in 1963, the park was family owned and operated until 2001, when Hershey Entertainment and Resorts purchased the property. Then, it changed hands once again in 2010 and has been part of the Palace Entertainment/Parques Reunidos family ever since. Throughout its almost 60-year history, Dutch Wonderland has maintained its familiar and nostalgic charm with rides like the Wonder House and Wonderland Special train, while still evolving with new technology and modern rides like Merlin's Mayhem, a family suspended roller coaster.

Each year Dutch Wonderland looks to recruit anywhere between 600 and 800 team members to cover ride operations, food and beverage, retail, games, environmental services and more, to deliver great service to its guests, who generally come from the Lancaster County area. Outside of the park's home market, Philadelphia and Baltimore are within a one-hour drive of the property, making these destinations top markets for the park too.

Typically open at the end of April/beginning of May for weekends until Memorial Day, the park then operates daily until late August, moving back to weekend operations through to early October. The entire park is then decorated and reopened for the rest of October for its annual Halloween event Happy Hauntings, before ending the year with Dutch Winter Wonderland, a festive event featuring hundreds of thousands of lights plus holiday treats and rides at the weekends – this runs from mid-November through to the end of December.

RWS Entertainment Group works closely with Dutch Wonderland to provide the park's mascot characters including Duke the Dragon, Princess Brooke, the Knight of Safety, Merlin and Mayhem – who all bring life to the park through a variety of live shows and appearances throughout the venue. Guests are also treated to Dutch Wonderland's Diving Shows; produced and performed by Mirage Entertainment, guests can enjoy multiple dive shows throughout the day with performers executing daring dives from heights of more than 50ft.

The three key roller coaster attractions at Dutch Wonderland are Kingdom Coaster, formerly known as Sky Princess – this was the first roller coaster designed

PARK LIFE



by Custom Coasters International, featuring a train from Philadelphia Toboggan Co.; Joust, which was the first of the Chance Big Dipper models; and Merlin's Mayhem, the park's most recent roller coaster, which opened in 2018 and is the first family suspended roller coaster from S&S Sansei Technologies.



Other fan-favourites at the park include the Wonderland Special, a Chance C.P. Huntington train with engines 123 and 206 on the property; the Double Splash Flume, an Arrow flume ride; Flying Trapeze, a YoYo model from Chance; and the Monorail, which was designed by Intermountain Design and takes guests on a journey through and outside the park gates.

In early 2020, the property expanded with the addition of the world's first Cartoon Network hotel, located just next door to the park. The 159-room hotel features a variety of guest rooms as well as Dream Suites, all themed to Cartoon Network shows such as Adventure Time, We Bare Bears, Powerpuff Girls and more. It is also home to the Cartoon Kitchen restaurant, the Bearista Café, indoor and outdoor pools and splash pad, a retail store with exclusive Cartoon Network merchandise and more and is a one-of-a-kind themed lodging experience that can't be found anywhere else in the region.

Back in the park, and Duke's Lagoon features a multi-level water play platform, kid-sized slides, a variety of spray nozzles, jets, tipping cones, a large tipping bucket and Pipeline Plunge, a classic attraction featuring two

large water slides and two levels of intensity. Guests can start with the lighter Blue Slide where they are able to see the path in front of them, or choose to turn out the lights with the Black Slide and ride a different path completely in the dark. The area also includes a lounge area in keeping with the tropical paradise theme of Duke's Lagoon, which includes palm trees, thatched umbrella shaded areas and plenty of seating.

Exploration Island sees guests journey to a prehistoric paradise full of adventure, fun and dinosaurs. Crossing the kingdom's bridge they will discover over 22 life-like dinosaurs on the Prehistoric Path. Children can dig up ancient fossils in the Dino Dig sand pits, drive around the island on Turnpike or take a relaxing boat ride through the prehistoric era on a gondola cruise.

Other guest services at Dutch Wonderland include an offering of great food and beverage items in-park suitable for every appetite. Families can sit down for a meal at Mill Stream Eatery, Merlin's Restaurant and Castle Café, or pick up a quick snack at one of the many other food locations.

In terms of accommodation, as well as the Cartoon Network hotel there is Old Mill Stream Campground, conveniently located steps away from the castle doors of Dutch Wonderland. The campground sits along a quiet stream on 15 acres, is near to outlet shopping, restaurants and theatres and offers over 130 campsites, plus tent camping sites and family cabins.



At a glance

Opened in 1963

Part of the Palace Entertainment/Parques Reunidos family

Over 35 rides

Three key rides –

Kingdom Coaster, Joust and Merlin's Mayhem

Suppliers include Chance, S&S Sansei Technologies, Arrow, Intermountain Design

Also incorporates Dukes Lagoon waterpark area

Accommodation includes Cartoon Network hotel and Old Mill Stream Campground

<https://www.dutchwonderland.com/>

TO WORK OR NOT TO WORK?!

By Dennis Speigel

Continuing his series of articles on the attractions industry, International Theme Park Services (ITPS) founder and CEO Dennis Speigel discusses how the attractions industry in the US is being impacted by the government's unemployment compensation programmes

HERE in the USA, businesses are lacking employees! Restaurants, retail and theme parks cannot adequately staff their operations, resulting in a reduction of service to the customers/guests they serve.

There are several reasons for this shortage. The first major issue is that the United States government has created programmes that actually pay people (our employees)

to stay home. A lackadaisical attitude has permeated the US workforce, unlike anything I have ever seen or experienced in my five decades of management. It has created an employment nightmare in every state.

In an effort to ostensibly help businesses across the US, our government set up unemployment compensation programmes that are so rich in benefits it has actually promoted and prompted people to stay at home and not be motivated to work! In addition to the unemployment benefits that can last nine to 10 months, these unemployed workers are now receiving a large stipend

benefit, through which if you are married and have children you receive a huge dollar amount! At a large restaurant in Cincinnati, the manager recently told me that his dishwasher, who has five children, just received a cheque for \$10,000. He said: "I don't think he will be coming in to work this weekend!"

Another recent example was a local company who furloughed several people due to COVID-19 and has now gotten busy after 10 months. They called one of the employees and wanted to know if they were ready to "get back to work." The response was: "I have two more months of unemployment to collect, so let's see how that goes!" What a shame. There is no incentive to encourage people to come back to work; rather, we are incentivising to keep people sitting on their butts at home watching TV and playing on the internet all day.

Now add to this the J-1 Visa stoppage and we find tourist attractions in the US are again suffering from the halting of a programme that we have utilised for three decades, which is importing foreign exchange students to augment the summer labour force across tourist spots and attractions in America.

Due to the previous presidential administration's stance on immigration, the J-1 visa programme was halted over two years ago. This programme provided companies like Cedar Fair, Six Flags, Universal, Disney and quite a few



other attraction operators with extra employees. Operators knew they could count on the J-1 visa employees to augment the annual operating season workforce during the pre and post season periods. Postponement of the J-1 visa



has affected places like Yellowstone and Yosemite National Parks, Myrtle Beach, Wisconsin Dells, Gatlinburg, Jackson Hole and many other tourist spots and theme parks.

With the loss of J-1 visa, along with the egregious unemployment programmes handed out by the government to so many, and for such a long period of time, we will have a negative impact that reaches well into 2022.

The government's programmes, while well intended on both the J-1 visa and unemployment benefits, were not well thought out. Unemployment statistics ending the month of April were 6.1 per cent, with 9.8 million people out of work! Pre-pandemic 2019, unemployment was 3.5 per cent and 5.5 million people unemployed. Teenage unemployment in the US, as of now (mid-May), is a whopping 12.3 per cent (many of whom are our attraction industry sector employees).

For over 25 years I have watched as our attractions industry has suffered and tried to roll out programmes to offset the deteriorating teen labour workforce issue. COVID-19, along with government subsidisation programmes, improperly issued and managed, are putting us on the brink of socialism. When we incentivise young people and adults to sit home, providing no motivation for them to want to go out and search for a job, we are charting a damaging course for our US workforce. The wrong signals are being sent about securing employment. To emphasise the point, Six Flags recently held a job fair in Massachusetts on a publicised weekend. They were expecting to hire several hundred students; it was reported that only nine people came to the job fair!

Kings Island, which hires 5,000 students annually, reported one week prior to opening that they were in need of 2,000+ students to fill their workforce.

Ken Whiting at Whiting Foods, Santa Cruz, California (IAAPA's 2022 incoming Chairman), has created a video to help employers inform their workforce what a severe impact "calling off" work can have on an attraction. I encourage everyone in our industry to contact Ken to see the video and learn how it can assist you on educating workers about the impact of not showing up for their confirmed work shifts (contact: www.whitingfoods.com).

The shrinking workforce is a serious problem (I believe even more serious than rising wages) which is not going away. As a global industry we need to search and come up with ways to stop this serious employee erosion problem. Definitely, here in the US, we do not need to foster programmes that encourage sitting at home and being paid. We are not teaching our young people the correct principles of preparing for their future, by paying them to sit around and be paid to do nothing!

To work or not to work? The answer must be to work!

Dennis Spiegel is founder and CEO of International Theme Park Services (ITPS), based in Cincinnati, Ohio, USA. A past chairman of the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA), he has over 50 years' experience in the theme park and leisure industry. Since its inception in 1983 ITPS has worked on over 500 projects in 50 countries and is uniquely qualified to assist in all aspects of entertainment project development.

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News round-up ...

US Quassy Amusement and Waterpark has announced it will host a Totally Rock'n Drive-In Laser Light Show this year. The weekend shows will start just after Labor Day with carload admission tickets available online for each scheduled evening. Full-colour laser graphics will be projected onto a huge screen, while numerous aerial laser beams fill the night sky over the audience. The 30 minute production will be choreographed to popular music. The park will also be incorporating its annual fall food drive with the event for which guests can donate non-perishable food items when attending the laser shows.

FRANCE François-Xavier Holderith has joined Compagnie des Alpes to serve as group chief financial officer and member of the Executive Committee. He has taken over the finance, risk and insurance duties of Denis Hermesse, who stepped down on May 1 to join the executive committee of STIB – Société des Transports Intercommunaux de Bruxelles, as senior vice-president for finance and services. STIB is Belgium's number one urban public transportation provider.

US Executive consulting and experiential design firm Raven Sun Creative has launched a new online experience for clients and industry peers. www.ravensuncreative.com offers a fresh look at the experience industry through case studies featuring some of the world's most iconic brands, including Hershey Entertainment and Resorts, Carnival Cruise Line, Evergrande Group and Lamborghini. The new digital experience also introduces an industry blog featuring thought leadership within the experiential entertainment, cultural heritage, technology evolution, IP expansion and destination development spaces. Louis Alfieri, principal and chief creative officer at Raven Sun Creative, described the website as an example of the organisation's brand and the way the firm has evolved and differentiated itself within the industry.

UK Blackpool Pleasure Beach (BPB) is celebrating its 125th anniversary year in 2021 with the opening of a new coffee shop that has links to the very beginnings

of the world-famous amusement park. WG Bean's is named after BPB's founder and is located at the front of the iconic Casino Building, close to the park's main entrance. WG Bean's will be serving freshly ground coffee and snacks every day throughout the 2021 season. The new coffee shop faces out onto Balmoral Road, close to Blackpool's famous promenade and has seating for over 80 customers across two floors.

THE NETHERLANDS Construction of the new catering location Bäckerei Krümel at Efteling is well on its way. The artisanal bakery, which will open on the square opposite the Max & Moritz family roller coaster, is beginning to take shape. In recent weeks, the foundations have been laid, the floors have been set and the building of the structure has commenced. The robust wooden trusses measuring 15m x 8m outline what the bakery will look like, while the walls of the building were then due to be bricked up, followed by the installation of wooden planks to create the cosy restaurant area. The bakery is the final piece to Max & Moritz Plein, which is intended to feel like an Alpine village. Bäckerei Krümel is scheduled to open its doors this winter.

US International Ride Training recently launched its new online training programme, Learning the ROPES: Ride Operations Professionalism, Efficiency and Safety. Designed by International Ride Training using standards developed in consultation with some of the leading ride operations professionals in the world, Learning the ROPES "is an ideal course for both new ride operators who have little or no background in the fundamentals of safe, efficient and professional operation and seasoned operators who may be in need of a 'back to basics' refresher course to shake off bad habits and refocus on their operation with fresh eyes," according to the organisation. One of the first clients to start using Learning the ROPES was the Sydney Royal Easter Show, the largest annual ticketed event in Australia. To learn more about Learning the Ropes, go to <https://ridetraining.com/ropes/>

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